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শিল্পী—

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নীল দর্পণং নাটকং

নীলকর-বিষধর দংশন কাতর প্রজানিকর-
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ঢাকা

শ্রীরামচন্দ্র ভৌমিক কর্ত্তৃক
বাঙ্গালা যন্ত্রে মুদ্রিত

শকাব্দা ১৭৮২। ১৮৬০ খ্রীষ্টাব্দ

ভূমিকা

নীলকরনিকরকরে নীল দর্পণ অর্পণ করিলাম। এক্ষণে তাঁহারা নিজ২ মুখ সন্দর্শনপূর্ব্বক তাঁহাদিগের ললাটে বিরাজমান স্বার্থপরতা কলঙ্ক তিলক বিমোচন করিয়া তৎপরিবর্ত্তে পরোপকার শ্বেতচন্দন ধারণ করুন, তাহা হইলেই আমার পরিশ্রমের সাফল্য, নিরাশ্রয় প্রজাব্রজের মঙ্গল এবং বিলাতের মুখ রক্ষা। হে নীলকরগণ! তোমাদিগেব নৃশংস ব্যবহারে প্রাতঃস্মরণীয় সিডনি, হাউয়ার্ড, হল প্রভৃতি মহানুভব দ্বারা অলঙ্কৃত ইংরাজকুলে কলঙ্ক রটিয়াছে। তোমাদিগেব ধনলিপ্সা কি এতই বলবতী যে তোমবা অকিঞ্চিৎকর ধনানুরোধ ইংরাজ জাতির বহুকালার্জ্জিত বিমল যশস্তামরসে কীটস্বরূপ ছিদ্র করিতে প্রবৃত্ত হইয়াছ। এক্ষণে তোমরা যে সাতিশয় অত্যাচাব দ্বারা বিপুল অর্থ লাভ কবিতেছ তাহা পরিহার কর, তাহা হইলে অনাথ প্রজারা সপবিবারে অনায়াসে কালাতিপাত করিতে পারিবে। তোমবা এক্ষণে দশ মুদ্রা ব্যয়ে শত মুদ্রার দ্রব্য গ্রহণ করিতেছ তাহাতে প্রজাপুঞ্জের যে ক্লেশ হইতেছে তাহা তোমরা বিশেষ জ্ঞাত আছ, কেবল ধনলাভপরতন্ত্র হইয়া প্রকাশকরণে অনিচ্ছুক। তোমরা কহিয়া থাক যে তোমাদের মধ্যে কেহ২ বিদ্যাদানে অর্থ বিতরণ করিয়া থাকেন এবং সুযোগক্রমে ঔষধ দেন এ কথা যদিও সত্য হয়, কিন্তু তাহাদের বিদ্যাদান পযস্বিনী ধেনুবধে পাদুকাদানাপেক্ষাও ঘৃণিত এবং ঔষধ বিতরণ কালকূটকুম্ভে ক্ষীর ব্যবধান মাত্র। শ্যামচাঁদ আঘাত উপরে কিঞ্চিৎ তার্পিন তৈল দিলেই যদি ডিস্পেন্সারি করা হয়, তবে তোমাদের প্রত্যেক কুটিতে ঔষধালয় আছে বলিতে হইবে। দৈনিক সংবাদপত্র সম্পাদকদ্বয় তোমাদের প্রশংসায় তাহাদের পত্র পরিপূর্ণ করিতেছে, তাহাতে অপর লোক যেমত বিবেচনা করুক তোমাদের মনে কখনই ত আনন্দ জন্মিতে পারে না, যেহেতু তোমরা তাহাদের এরূপ করণের কারণ বিলক্ষণ অবগত আছ। রজতের কি আশ্চর্য্য আকর্ষণশক্তি! ত্রিংশৎ মুদ্রালোভে অবজ্ঞাস্পদ জুডাস, খৃষ্ট ধর্ম্ম প্রচারক মহাত্মা যীজস্‌কে করাল পাইলেট করে অর্পণ করিয়াছিল; সম্পাদকযুগল সহস্র মুদ্রালাভ পরবশ হইয়া উপায়হীন দীন প্রজাগণকে তোমাদের করাল কবলে নিক্ষেপ করিবে আশ্চর্য্য কি? কিন্তু "চক্রবৎ পরিবর্ত্তন্তে দুঃখানি চ সুখানি চ," প্রজাবৃন্দের সুখ সূর্য্যোদয়ের সম্ভাবনা দেখা যাইতেছে। দাসীদ্বারা সন্তানকে স্তনদুগ্ধ দেওয়া অবৈধ

বিবেচনায় দয়াশীলা প্রজা জননী মহারাণী ভিকটোরিয়া প্রজাদিগকে স্বক্রোড়ে লইয়া স্তন পান করাইতেছেন। সুধীর সুবিজ্ঞ সাহসী উদারচরিত্র ক্যানিং মহোদয় গভরনর জেনরল হইয়াছেন। প্রজার দুঃখে দুঃখী, প্রজার সুখে সুখী, দুষ্টের দমন, শিষ্টের পালন, ন্যায়পর গ্র্যাণ্ট মহামতি লেফটেনেণ্ট গভরনর হইয়াছেন এবং ক্রমশঃ সত্যপরায়ণ, বিচক্ষণ, নিরপেক্ষ, ইডেন, হার্সেল প্রভৃতি রাজকার্য্য-পরিচালকগণ শতদল স্বরূপে সিবিল সরভিসসরোবরে বিকসিত হইতেছেন। অতএব ইহা দ্বারা স্পষ্ট প্রতীয়মান হইতেছে, নীলকর দুষ্টরাহুগ্রস্ত প্রজাবৃন্দের অসহ্য কষ্ট নিবারণার্থে উক্ত মহানুভবগণ যে অচিরাৎ সদ্বিচাররূপ সুদর্শনচক্র হস্তে গ্রহণ করিবেন, তাহার সূচনা হইয়াছে।

কস্যচিৎ পথিকস্য।

নাট্যোল্লিখিত ব্যক্তিগণ

পুরুষগণ

গোলোকচন্দ্র বসু	
নবীনমাধব বিন্দুমাধব	গোলোকচন্দ্র বসুর পুত্রদ্বয়
সাধুচরণ	প্রতিবাসী রাইয়ত
রাইচরণ	সাধুর ভ্রাতা
গোপীনাথ দাস	দেওয়ান
আই. আই. উড পি. পি. রোগ	নীলকর
আমিন	
খালাসী	
তাইদগীর	

ম্যাজিষ্ট্রেট, আমলা, মোক্তার, ডেপুটি ইন্‌স্পেক্টর, পণ্ডিত, জেলদারোগা, ডাক্তার, গোপ, কবিরাজ, চারিজন শিশু, লাটিয়াল, রাখাল।

কামিনীগণ

সাবিত্রী	গোলোকের স্ত্রী
সৈরিন্ধ্রী	নবীনের স্ত্রী
সরলতা	বিন্দুমাধবের স্ত্রী
রেবতী	সাধুচরণের স্ত্রী
ক্ষেত্রমণি	সাধুর কন্যা
আদুরী	গোলোক বসুর বাড়ীর দাসী
পদী	ময়রাণী

প্রথম অঙ্ক

প্রথম গর্ভাঙ্ক

স্বরপুর—গোলোকচন্দ্র বসুর গোলাঘরের রোয়াক

গোলোকচন্দ্র বসু এবং সাধুচরণ আসীন

সাধু। আমি তখনি বলেছিলাম, কর্ত্তা মহাশয়, আর এ দেশে থাকা নয়, তা আপনি শুনিলেন না; কাঙ্গালের কথা বাসি হলে খাটে।

গোলোক। বাপু, দেশ ছেড়ে যাওয়া কি মুখের কথা? আমার এখানে সাত পুরুষ বাস। স্বর্গীয় কর্ত্তারা যে জমা জমি করে্যে গিয়াছেন তাহাতে কখন পরের চাকরি স্বীকার করিতে হয় নি। যে ধান জন্মায় তাতে সম্বৎসরের খোরাক হয়, অতিথিসেবা চলে, আর পূজার খরচ কুলায়; যে সরিষা পাই তাহাতে তেলের সংস্থান হইয়া ৬০।৭০ টাকা বিক্রী হয়। বল কি বাপু, আমার সোনার স্বরপুর, কিছুরি ক্লেশ নাই। ক্ষেতের চাল, ক্ষেতের ডাল, ক্ষেতের তেল, ক্ষেতের গুড়, বাগানের তরকারি, পুস্করের মাচ! এমন সুখের বাস ছাড়তে কার হৃদয় না বিদীর্ণ হয়? আর কেই বা সহজে পারে?

সাধু। এখন তো সুখের বাস নাই। আপনার বাগান গিয়াছে, গাঁতিও যায় যায় হয়েছে। আহ! তিন বৎসর হয় নি সাহেব পত্তনি লয়েছে, এর মধ্যে গাঁখান ছারক্ষার করে্যে তুলেছে। দক্ষিণপাড়ার মোড়লদের বাড়ীর দিকে চাওয়া যায় না, আহা! কি ছিল কি হয়েছে। তিন বৎসর আগে দু বেলায় ৬০ খান পাত পড়্তো, ১০ খান লাঙ্গল ছিল, দামড়াও ৪০।৫০টা হবে। কি উঠানই ছিল, যেন ঘোড়দৌড়ের মাঠ, আহা! যখন আসধানের পালা সাজাতো বোধ হতো যেন চন্দন বিলে পদ্মফুল ফুটে রয়েছে। গোয়ালখান ছিল যেন একটা পাহাড়। গেল সন, গোয়াল সারিতে না পারায় উঠানে হুমড়ি খেয়ে পড়ে রয়েছে। ধানের ভূঁয়ে নীল করে নি বল্যে মেজো সেজো দুই ভাইকে ধরে সাহেব বেটা আর বৎসর কি মারটিই মেরেছিল; উহাদের খালাস করে্যে আন্তে কত কষ্ট, হাল গোরু বিক্রী হয়ে যায়। ঐ চোটেই দুই মোড়ল গাঁছাড়া হয়।

গোলোক। বড় মোড়ল না তার ভাইদের আন্তে গিয়েছিল?

সাধু। তারা বলেছে, ঝুলি নিয়ে ভিক্ষে করে খাব তবু ও গাঁয় আর বসত্ করবো না। বড় মোড়ল এখন একা পড়েছে। দুইখান লাঙ্গল রেখেছে, তা প্রায়ই নীলের জমিতে যোড়া থাকে। এও পালাবার যোগাড়ে আছে। কর্ত্তা মহাশয়, আপনিও দেশের মায়া ত্যাগ করুন। গত বারে আপনার ধান গিয়েছে, এই বারে মান যাবে।

গোলোক। মান যাওয়ার আর বাকি কি? পুষ্করিণীটির চার পাড়ে চাস দিয়াছে, তাহাতে এবার নীল করবে, তা হলেই মেয়েদের পুকুরে যাওয়া বন্ধ হলো! আর সাহেব বেটা বলেছে, যদি পূর্ব্ব মাঠের ধানি জমি কয়খানায় নীল না বুনি, তবে নবীনমাধবকে সাত কুটির জল খাওয়াইবে।

সাধু। বড়বাবু না কুটি গিয়েছেন?

গোলোক। সাধে গিয়েছেন, প্যায়দায় লয়ে গিয়াছে।

সাধু। বড়বাবুর কিন্তু ভ্যালা সাহস। সেদিনে সাহেব বল্লে, "যদি তুমি আমিন খালাসীর কথা না শোনো, আর চিহ্নিত জমিতে নীল না কর, তবে তোমার বাড়ী উঠাইয়ে বেত্রবতীর জলে ফেলাইয়া দিব এবং তোমাকে কুটির গুদামে ধান খাওয়াইব।" তাহাতে বড়বাবু কহিলেন, "আমার গত সনের ৫০ বিঘা নীলের দাম চুকাইয়ে না দিলে এ বৎসর এক বিঘাও নীল করিব না, এতে প্রাণ পর্য্যন্ত পণ, বাড়ী কি ছার।"

গোলোক। তা না বলেই বা করে কি। দেখ দেখি, পঞ্চাশ বিঘা ধান হইলে আমায় সংসারের কিছু কি ভাবনা থাক্তো! তাই যদি নীলের দামগুলো চুক্য়ে দেয় তবু অনেক কষ্ট নিবারণ হয়।

নবীনমাধবের প্রবেশ

কি বাবা, কি কর্য়ে এলে?

নবীন। আজ্ঞে, জননীর পরিতাপ বিবেচনা কর্য়ে কি কালসর্প ক্রোড়স্থ শিশুকে দংশন করিতে সঙ্কুচিত হয়? আমি অনেক স্তুতিবাদ করিলাম, তা তিনি কিছুই বুঝিলেন না। সাহেবের সেই কথা, তিনি বলেন ৫০ টাকা লইয়া ৬০ বিঘা নীলের লেখাপড়া করিয়া দাও পরে একেবারে দুই সনের হিসাব চুকাইয়ে দেওয়া যাবে।

গোলোক। ৬০ বিঘা নীল কত্তে হল্যে অন্য ফসলে হাত দিতে হবে না। অন্ন বিনাই মারা যেতে হলো।

নবীন। আমি বলিলাম, সাহেব, আমাদিগের লোকজন লাঙ্গল গোরু সকলি আপনি নীলের জমিতে নিযুক্ত রাখুন, কেবল আমাদিগের সম্বৎসরের আহার দিবেন, আমরা বেতন প্রার্থনা করি না। তাহাতে উপহাস করিয়া কহিলেন, "তোমরা তো যবনের ভাত খাও না।"

সাধু। যারা পেটভাতায় চাক্‌রি করে, তারাও আমাদিগের অপেক্ষা সুখী।

গোলোক। লাঙ্গল প্রায় ছেড়ে দিয়াছি, তবু তো নীল করা ঘোচে না। নাছোড় হইলে হাত কি? সাহেবের সঙ্গে বিবাদ তো সম্ভবে না, বেঁধে মারে সয় ভাল, কাযে কাযেই গস্তে হবে।

নবীন। আপনি যেমন অনুমতি করিবেন আমি সেইরূপ করিব। কিন্তু আমার মানস একবার মোকদ্দমা করা।

আদুরীর প্রবেশ

আদুরী। মাঠাকুরুণ যে বক্‌তি লেগেচে, কত বেলা হলো, আপ্‌নারা নাবা খাবা কর্‌বেন না? ভাত শুকয়ে যে চাল হইয়ে গেল।

সাধু। (দাঁড়ায়ে) কর্ত্তা মহাশয়, এর একটা বিলি ব্যবস্থা করুন, নতুবা আমি মারা যাই। দেড়খানা লাঙ্গলে নয় বিঘা নীল দিতে হলে, হাঁড়ি সিকেয় উঠ্‌বে। আমি আসি, কর্ত্তা মহাশয় অবধান, বড়বাবু নমস্কার করি গো।

সাধুচরণের প্রস্থান

গোলোক। পরমেশ্বর এ ভিটায় স্নান আহার করিতে দেন, এমত বোধ হয় না, যাও বাবা, স্নান কর গে।

সকলের প্রস্থান

দ্বিতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

সাধুচরণের বাড়ী

লাঙ্গল লইয়া রাইচরণের প্রবেশ

রাই। (লাঙ্গল রাখিয়া) আমিন সুমুন্দি য্যান বাগ, যে রোক্ করে মোর দিকি আস্‌চিলো, বাবা রে! মুই বলি মোরে বুঝি খালে। শালা কোন মতেই শোন্‌লে না। জোর করিই দাগ মার্‌লে। সাঁপোলতলার ৫ কুড়ো ভুঁই যদি নীলি গ্যাল তবে

মাগ ছ্যালেরে খাওয়াব কি। কাঁদাকাটি কর্ব্যে দ্যাক্‌বো, যদি না ছাড়ে তবে মোরা কাযিই দ্যাশ্ ছাড়ে যাব

ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রবেশ

দাদা বাড়ী এয়েচে?

ক্ষেত্র। বাবা বাবুদের বাড়ী গিয়েছে, আলেন, আর দেরি নেই। কাকিমারে দেখ্‌তি যাবা না? তুমি বক্‌চো কি?

রাই। বক্‌চি মোর মাতা। একটু জল আন্ দিনি খাই, তেষ্টায় যে ছাতি ফেটে গ্যাল। সুমুন্দিরি অ্যাত করি বল্লাম, তা কিছুতেই শোন্‌লে না।

সাধুচরণের প্রবেশ এবং ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রস্থান

সাধু। রাইচরণ, এত সকালে যে বাড়ী এলি?

রাই। দাদা, আমিন শালা সাঁপোলতলার জমিতি দাগ মেরেচে। খাব কি, বচ্ছোর যাবে কেমন করে। আহা জমি তো না, য্যান সোণার চাঁপা। এক কোন্ কোটে মহাজন কাৎ কত্তাম। খাব কি, ছ্যালেপিলে খাবে কি, এতডা পরিবার না খাতি পেয়ে মারা যাবে, ও মা! রাত পোয়ালি যে দু কাটা চালের খরচ, না খাতি পেয়ে মর্‌বো, আরে পোড়া কপাল, আরে পোড়া কপাল, গোডার নীলি কল্লে কি? অ্যাঁ! অ্যাঁ!

সাধু। ঐ ক বিঘা জমির ভরসাতেই থাকা, তাই যদি গ্যালো, তবে আর এখানে থেকে কর্‌বো কি। আর যে দুই এক বিঘা নোনা ফেনা আছে, তাতে তো ফলন নাই, আর নীলের জমিতে লাঙ্গল থাকবে, তা কারতিকী বা কখন করবো। তুই কাঁদিস্ নে, কাল হাল গরু বেচে গাঁর মুখে ঝ্যাঁটা মেরে বসন্তবাবুর জমিদারিতে পাল্‌য়ে যাব।

ক্ষেত্রমণি ও রেবতীর জল লইয়া প্রবেশ

জল খা, জল খা, ভয় কি, জীব দিয়েচে যে, আহার দেবে সে। তা দুই আমিনকে কি বল্যে এলি!

রাই। মুই বল্‌বো কি, জমিতি দাগ মার্‌তি নাগ্‌লো, মোর বুকি য্যান বিদে কাটি পুড়ুয়ে দিতি নাগ্‌লো। মুই পায় ধল্লাম, ট্যাকা দিতে চালাম, তা কিছুই শোন্‌লে না। বলে, যা তোর বড় বাবুর কাছে যা, তোর বাবার কাছে যা, মুই ফোজদুরি করবো বল্যে সেঁস্‌য়ে এইচি। (আমিনকে দূরে দেখিয়া) ঐ দ্যাখ শালা আস্‌চে, প্যায়দা সঙ্গে কর্ব্যে এনেচে, কুটি ধর্ব্যে নিয়ে যাবে।

আমিন এবং দুই জন পেয়াদার প্রবেশ

আমিন। বাঁদ্, রেয়ে শালাকে বাঁদ্।

পেয়াদাদ্বয় দ্বারা রাইচরণের বন্ধন

রেবতী। ও মা ই কি, হ্যাগা বাঁদো ক্যান। কি সর্ব্বনাশ, কি সর্ব্বনাশ। (সাধুর প্রতি) তুমি দেঁড়ুয়ে দ্যাক্‌চো কি, বাবুদের বাড়ী যাও, বড় বাবুকে ডেকে আনো।

আমিন। (সাধুর প্রতি) তুই যাবি কোথা, তোরও যেতে হবে। দাদন লওয়া রেয়ের কর্ম্ম নয়। ঢ্যারা সইতে অনেক সইতে হয়। তুই লেখা পড়া জানিস, তোকে খাতায় দস্তখৎ কর্য়ে দিয়ে আস্‌তে হবে।

সাধু। আমিন মহাশয়! একে কি নীলের দাদন বলো, নীলের গাদন বল্যে ভাল হয় না? হা পোড়া অদৃষ্ট, তুমি আমার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আছ, যে ঘার ভয়ে পাল্য়ে এলাম, সেই ঘায় আবার পড়লাম। পত্তনির আগে এ তো রামরাজ্য ছিল, তা হাবাতেও ফকির হলো দেশেও মন্বন্তর হলো।

আমিন। (ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রতি দৃষ্টিপাত করে স্বগত) এ ছুঁড়ি তো মন্দ নয়। ছোট সাহেব এমন মাল পেলে তো লুপে নেবে—আপনার বুন দিয়ে বড় পেস্কারি পেলাম, তা এরে দিয়ে পাবো—তবে মালটা ভাল, দেখা যাক্।

রেবতী। ক্ষেত্র, মা তুই ঘরের মধ্যে যা।

ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রস্থান

আমিন। চল্ সাধু, এই বেলা মানে মানে কুটি চল।

যাইতে অগ্রসর হইল

রেবতী। ও যে এট্টু জল খ্যাতি চেয়েলো, ও আমিন মশাই তোমার কি মাগ ছেলে নাই, কেবল লাঙ্গল রেখেছে আর এই মারপিট। ও মা ও যে ডব্‌কা ছেলে, ও যে এতক্ষণ দু বার খায়, না খেয়ে সাহেবের কুটি যাবে কেমন করে, সে যে অনেক দূর। দোহাই সাহেবের, ওরে চাড্ডি খেইয়ে নিয়ে যাও—আহা, আহা, মাগ ছেলের জন্যেই কাতর, এখনো চকি জল পড়্চে, মুখ শুইকে গেছে—কি কর্‌বো, কি পোড়া দেশে এলাম, ধনে প্রাণে গ্যালাম, হায়, হায়, হায়, ধনে প্রাণে গ্যালাম (ক্রন্দন)।

আমিন। আরে মাগি তোর নাকি সুর এখন রাখ, জল দিতে হয় তো দে, নয় ওমনি নিয়ে যাই।

রাইচরণের জলপান এবং সকলের প্রস্থান

তৃতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

বেগুণবেড়ের কুটি, বড় বাঙ্গলার বারেন্দা

আই, আই, উড সাহেব এবং গোপীনাথ দাস দেওয়ানের প্রবেশ

গোপী। হুজুর, আমি কি কসুর করিতেছি, আপনি স্বচক্ষেই তো দেখিতেছেন। অতি প্রত্যূষে ভ্রমণ করিতে আরম্ভ করিয়া তিন প্রহরের সময় বাসায় প্রত্যাগমন করি, এবং আহারের পরেই আবার দাদনের কাগজ পত্র লইয়া বসি, তাহাতে কোন দিন রাত্র দুই প্রহরও হয়, কোন দিন বা একটাও বাজে।

উড। তুমি শালা বড় না-লায়েক আছে। স্বরপুর, শামনগর, শান্তিঘাটা এ তিন গাঁয় কিছু দাদন হলো না। শ্যামচাঁদ বেগোর তোম্ দোরস্ত হোগা নেই।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, অধীন হুজুরের চাকর, আপনিই অনুগ্রহ করিয়া পেস্কারি হইতে দেওয়ানি দিয়াছেন। হুজুর মালিক, মারিলেও মারিতে পারেন, কাটিলেও কাটিতে পারেন। এ কুটির কতকগুলিন প্রবল শত্রু হইয়াছে, তাহাদের শাসন ব্যতীত নীলের মঙ্গল হওয়া দুষ্কর।

উড। আমি না জানিলে কেমন কর্য়ে শাসন করিতে পারে। টাকা, ঘোড়া, লাটিয়াল, সুড়কিওয়ালা আমার অনেক আছে, ইহাতে শাসন হইতে পারে না? সাবেক দেওয়ান শক্রর কথা আমাকে জানাইতো—তুমি দেখি নি, আমি বজ্জাতদের চাবুক দিয়াছি, গোরু কেড়ে আনিয়াছি, জরু কয়েদ করিয়াছি, জরু কয়েদ করিলে শালা লোক বড় শাসিত হয়। বজ্জাতি কা বাত হাম কুচ শুনা নেই—তুমি বেটা লক্কিছাড়া আমারে কিছু বলি নি—তুমি শালা বড় না-লায়েক আছে। দেওয়ানি কাম কায়েট্কা হায় নেই বাবা—তোম্‌কো জুতি মার্‌কে নেকাল ডেকে হাম্ এক আদ্‌মি ক্যাওটকো এ কাম দেগা।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, যদিও বন্দা জাতিতে কায়স্থ, কিন্তু কার্য্যে ক্যাওট, ক্যাওটের মতই কর্ম্ম দিতেছে। মোল্লাদের ধান ভেঙ্গে নীল করিবার জন্য এবং গোলোক বসের সাত পুরুষে লাখেরাজ বাগান ও রাজার আমলের গাঁতি বাহির করিয়া লইতে আমি যে সকল কায করিয়াছি, তাহা ক্যাওট কি চামারেও পারে না, তা আমার কপাল মন্দ, তাই এত করেও যশ নাই।

উড। নবীনমাধব শালা সব টাকা চুক্‌য়ে চায়—ওস্‌কো হাম্ এক কৌড়ি নেহি দেগা, ওস্‌কা হিসাব দোরস্ত কর্‌কে রাখ—বাঞ্চৎ বড়া মাম্‌লাবাজ, হাম্ দেখেগা শালা কেস্তারে রূপেয়া লেয়।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, ঐ একজন কুটির প্রধান শক্র। পলাশপুর জ্বালান কখনই প্রমাণ হইত না যদি নবীন বস ওর ভিতরে না থাকিত। বেটা আপনি দরখাস্তের মুসাবিদা করিয়া দেয়, উকীল মোক্তারদিগের এমন সলা পরামর্শ দিয়াছিল যে তাহার জোরেই হাকিমের রায় ফিরিয়া যায়। এই বেটার কৌশলেই সাবেক দেওয়ানের দুই বৎসর মেয়াদ হয়। আমি বারণ করিয়াছিলাম, নবীনবাবু, সাহেবের বিরুদ্ধাচরণ কর না। বিশেষ সাহেব তো তোমার ঘর জ্বালান নাই. তাতে বেটা উত্তর দিল "গোরিব প্রজাগণের রক্ষাতে দীক্ষিত হইয়াছি. নিষ্ঠুর নীলকরের পীড়ন হইতে যদি একজন প্রজাকেও রক্ষা করিতে পারি তাহা হইলেই আপনাকে ধন্য জ্ঞান করিব. আর দেওয়ানজিকে জেলে দিয়ে বাগানের শোধ লব।" বেটা যেন পাদরি হয়ে বসেছে। বেটা এবার আবার কি যোটাযোট করিতেছে তার কিছুই বুঝিতে পারি না।

উড। তুমি ভয় পাইয়াছ, হাম বোলা কি নেই, তুমি বড় না-লায়েক আছে, তোমছে কাম হোগা নেই।

গোপী। হুজুর ভয় পাওয়ার মত কি দেখিলেন. যখন এ পদবীতে পদার্পণ করিছি, তখন ভয়, লজ্জা, সরম, মান, মর্য্যাদার মাথা খাইয়াছি, গোহত্যা, ব্রহ্মহত্যা, স্ত্রীহত্যা, ঘর জ্বালান অঙ্গের আভরণ হইয়াছে, আর জেলখানা শিওরে করে বসে আছি।

উড। আমি কথা চাই নে, আমি কায চাই।

সাধুচরণ, রাইচরণ, আমিন ও পেয়াদাদ্বয়ের সেলাম করিতে২ প্রবেশ

এ বজ্জাতের হস্তে দড়ি পড়িয়াছে কেন?

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, এই সাধুচরণ একজন মাতব্বর রাইয়ত, কিন্তু নবীন বসের পরামর্শে নীলের ধ্বংসে প্রবৃত্ত হইয়াছে।

সাধু। ধর্ম্মাবতার, নীলের বিরুদ্ধাচরণ করি নাই, করিতেছি না, এবং করিবার ক্ষমতাও নাই, ইচ্ছায় করি আর অনিচ্ছায় করি, নীল করিছি, এবারেও করিতে প্রস্তুত আছি। তবে সকল বিষয়ের সম্ভব অসম্ভব আছে, আদ আঙ্গুল চুঙ্গিতে আট আঙ্গুল বারুদ পূরিলে কাযেই ফাটে। আমি অতি ক্ষুদ্র প্রজা, দেড়খানি লাঙ্গল রাখি, আবাদ হদ্দ ২০ বিঘা, তার মধ্যে যদি ৯ বিঘা নীলে গ্রাস করে তবে কাযেই চট্‌তে হয়। তা আমার চটায় আমিই মর্‌বো, হুজুরের কি!

গোপী। সাহেবের ভয়, পাছে তুমি সাহেবকে তোমাদের বড় বাবুর গুদামে কয়েদ কর্‌ে্য রাখ।

সাধু। দেওয়ানজি মহাশয়, মড়ার উপর আর খাঁড়ার ঘা কেন দেন। আমি কোন কীটস্য কীট যে সাহেবকে কয়েদ করবো, প্রবল প্রতাপশালী—

গোপী। সাধু, তোর সাধুভাষা রাখ্, চাসার মুখে ভাল শুনায় না, গায় যেন ঝাঁটার বাড়ি মারে—

উড। বাঞ্চৎ বড় পণ্ডিত হইয়াছে।

আমিন। বেটা রাইতদিগের আইন পরোয়ানা সব বুঝাইয়া দিয়া গোল করিতেছে, বেটার ভাই মরে লাঙ্গল ঠেলে, উনি বলেন "প্রতাপশালী"—

গোপী। ঘুঁটেকুড়ানীর ছেলে সদর নায়েব।—ধর্ম্মাবতার! পল্লীগ্রামে স্কুল স্থাপন হওয়াতে চাসালোকের দৌরাত্ম্য বাড়িয়াছে।

উড। গবরণমেণ্টে এ বিষয়ে দরখাস্ত করিতে আমাদিগের সভায় লিখিতে হইবেক, স্কুল রহিত করিতে লড়াই করিব।

আমিন। বেটা মোকদ্দমা করিতে চায়।

উড। (সাধুচরণের প্রতি) তুমি শালা বড় বজ্জাত আছে। তোমার যদি ২০ বিঘার ৯ বিঘা নীল করিতে বলেছে তবে তুমি কেন আর ৯ বিঘা নূতন করিয়া ধান কর না।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, যে লোকসান জমা পড়ে আছে তাহা হইতে ৯ বিঘা কেন ২০ বিঘা পাট্টা করিয়া দিতে পারি।

সাধু। (স্বগত) হা ভগবান শুঁড়ির সাক্ষী মাতাল। (প্রকাশে) হুজুর, যে ৯ বিঘা নীলের জন্যে চিহ্নিত হইয়াছে, তাহা যদি কুটির লাঙ্গল, গোরু ও মাইন্দার দিয়া আবাদ হয়, তবে আমি আর ৯ বিঘা নূতন করিয়া ধানের জন্যে লইতে পারি। ধানের জমিতে যে কারকিত কবিতে হয়, তার চার গুণ কারকিত নীলের জমিতে দরকার করে, সুতরাং যদিও ৯ বিঘা আমার চাস দিতে হয়, তবে বাকী ১১ বিঘাই পড়ে থাক্‌বে, তা আবার নূতন জমি আবাদ করবো।

উড। শালা বড় হারামজাদা, দাদনের টাকা নিবি তুই, চাস দিতে হবে আমি, শালা বড় বজ্জাত (জুতার গুঁতা প্রহার) শ্যামচাঁদকা সাৎ মুলাকাৎ হোনেসে হারামজাদ্‌কি সব ছোড় যাগা। (দেয়াল হইতে শ্যামচাঁদ গ্রহণ)

সাধু। হুজুর, মাছি মেরে হাত কাল করা মাত্র, আমরা—

রাই। (সক্রোধে) ও দাদা, তুই চুপ দে, ঝা ন্যাকে নিতি চাচ্চে ন্যাকে দে,

ক্ষিদের চোটে নাড়ী ছিঁড়ে পড়লো, সারা দিন্‌ডে গ্যাল, নাতিও পালাম না, খাতিও পালাম না।

আমিন। কই শালা, ফৌজদারী কর্‌লি নে! (কান মলন)

রাই। (হাঁপাইতে২) মলাম, মাগো! মাগো!

উড। ব্লাডি নিগার, মারো বাঞ্চৎকো। (শ্যামচাঁদাঘাত)

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রাই। বড়বাবু, মলাম গো! জল খাবো গো! মেরে ফ্যাল্লে গো।

নবীন। ধর্ম্মাবতার, উহাদিগের এখন স্নানও হয় নাই আহারও হয় নাই। উহাদের পরিবারেরা এখন বাসি মুখে জল দেয় নাই। যদি শ্যামচাঁদ আঘাতে রাইয়ত সমুদায় বিনাশ করিয়া ফেলেন তবে আপনার নীল বুনবে কে? এই সাধুচরণ গত বৎসর কত ক্লেশে ৪ বিঘা নীল দিয়াছে, যদি উহাকে এরূপ নিদারুণ প্রহারে এবং অধিক দাদন চাপাইয়া ফেরার করেন তবে আপনারই লোকসান। উহাদের অদ্য ছাড়িয়া দেন, আমি কল্য প্রাতে সমভিব্যাহারে আনিয়া আপনি যেরূপ অনুমতি করিবেন সেইরূপ করিয়া যাইব।

উড। তোমার নিজের চরকায় তেল দেহ। পরের বিষয়ে কথা কহিবার কি আবশ্যক আছে?—সাধু ঘোষ, তোর মত কি তা বল? আমার খানার সময় হইয়াছে।

সাধু। হুজুর, আমার মতের অপেক্ষা আছে কি? আপনি নিজে গিয়া ভাল২ চার বিঘাতে মার্ক দিয়া আসিয়াছেন, আজ আমিন মহাশয় আর যে কয়খান ভাল জমি ছিল তাহাতেও চিহ্ন দিয়া আসিয়াছেন। আমার অমতে জমি নির্দ্দিষ্ট হইয়াছে, নীলও সেইরূপ হইবে। আমি স্বীকার করিতেছি বিনা দাদনে নীল কর্য়ে দিব।

উড। আমার দাদন সব মিছে, হারামজাদা, বজ্জাত, বেইমান, (শ্যামচাঁদ প্রহার)।

নবীন। (সাধুচরণের পৃষ্ঠে হস্ত দিয়া আবরণ) হুজুর, গরিব ছাপোষা লোকটাকে একেবারে মেরে ফেলিলেন। আহা! উহার বাড়ীতে খাইতে অনেকগুলিন। এ প্রহারে এক মাস শয্যাগত হইয়া থাকিতে হইবে। আহা! উহার পরিবারের মনে কি ক্লেশ হইতেছে, সাহেব, আপনারও পরিবার আছে, যদি আপনাকে খানার সময় কেহ ধৃত করিয়া লইয়া যায় তবে মেমসাহেবের মনে কেমন পরিতাপ জন্মে।

উড। চপরাও, শালা, বাঞ্চুৎ, পাজি, গোরুখোর। এ আর অমরনগরের মাজিষ্ট্রেট নয় যে কথায় কথায় নালিশ কর্‌বি, আর কুটির লোক ধর্‌য়ে মেয়াদ দিবি। ইন্দ্রাবাদের মাজিষ্ট্রেট তোমার মৃত্যু হইয়াছে। র্‍্যাসকেল—এই দিনের মধ্যে তুই ৬০ বিঘা দাদন লিখিয়া দিবি তবে তোর ছাড়ান, নচেৎ এই শ্যামচাঁদ তোর মাথায় ভাঙ্গিব। গোস্তাকি! তোর দাদনের জন্যে দশখানা গ্রামের দাদন বন্ধ রহিয়াছে।

নবীন। (দীর্ঘনিশ্বাস) হে মাতঃ পৃথিবি! তুমি দ্বিধা হও, আমি তন্মধ্যে প্রবেশ করি। এমন অপমান আমার জন্মেও হয় নাই—হা বিধাতঃ!

গোপী। নবীনবাবু, বাড়াবাড়ি কায কি, আপনি বাড়ী যান।

নবীন। সাধু, পরমেশ্বরকে ডাক, তিনিই দীনের রক্ষক।

নবীনমাধবের প্রস্থান

উড। গোলামকি গোলাম। দেওয়ান, দপ্তরখানায় লইয়া যাও, দস্তুর মোতাবেক দাদন দেও।

উডের প্রস্থান

গোপী। চল সাধু, দপ্তরখানায় চল। সাহেব কি কথায় ভোলে।

বাড়া ভাতে ছাই তব বাড়া ভাতে ছাই।
ধরেছে নীলের যবে আর রক্ষা নাই॥

সকলের প্রস্থান

চতুর্থ গর্ভাঙ্ক

গোলোক বসুর দরদালান

সৈরিন্ধ্রী চুলের দড়ি বিনাইতে নিযুক্ত

সৈরিন্ধ্রী। আমার হাতে এমন দড়ি একগাছিও হয় নি। ছোট বউ বড় পয়মন্ত। ছোট বয়ের নাম কর্‌য়ে যা করি তাই ভাল হয়। এক পণ ছুট্ করেছি কিন্তু মুটোর ভিতর থাক্‌বে। যেমন একঢাল চুল তেমনি দড়ি হয়েছে। আহা চুল তো নয়, শ্যামাঠাকুরুণের কেশ, মুখখানি যেন পদ্মফুল সর্ব্বদাই হাস্যবদন। লোকে বলে যা-কে যায় দেখ্‌তে পারে না, আমি তো তার কিছুই দেখি নে। ছোট বয়ের

মুখ দেখ্‌লে আমার তো বুক জুড়য়ে যায়। আমার বিপিনও যেমন ছোট বউও তেমন। ছোট বউ তো আমাকে মায়ের মত ভালবাসে।

সিকাহস্ত সরলতার প্রবেশ

সর। দিদি, দ্যাখ দেখি, আমি সিকের তলাটি বুন্‌তে পেরেছি কিনা!—হয় নি?

সৈরিন্ধ্রী। (অবলোকন করিয়া) হ্যাঁ এইবার দিব্বি হয়েছে। ও বোন্, এই খানটি যে ডুবিয়েছো, লালের পর জরদ তো খোলে না।

সর। আমি তোমার সিকে দেখে বুন্‌ছিলাম—

সৈরি। তাতে কি লালের পর জরদ আছে?

সর। না তাতে লালের পর সবুজ আছে। কিন্তু আমার সবুজ সুতা ফুর্‌য়ে গেছে তাই আমি ওখানে জরদ দিয়েছি।

সৈরি। তোমার বুঝি আর হাটের দিন পর্য্যন্ত ভর সইল না। তোমার বোন্ সকলি তাড়াতাড়ি, বলে

বৃন্দাবনে আছেন হরি।
ইচ্ছা হলে রইতে নারি॥

সর। বাহবা—আমার কি দোষ, হাটে কি পাওয়া যায়? ঠাকুরুণ গেলহাটে মহাশয়কে আন্‌তে বলেছিলেন, তা তিনি পান নি।

সৈরি। তবে ওঁরা যখন ঠাকুরপোকে চিটি লিখিবেন সেই সময় পাঁচ রঙ্গের সূতার কথা লিখে দিতে বল্‌বো।

সর। দিদি এ মাসের আর ক'দিন আছে গা—

সৈরি। (হাস্যবদনে) যার যেখানে ব্যথা, তার সেখানে হাত। ঠাকুরপোর কালেজ বন্দ হলে বাড়ী আস্‌বের কথা আছে—তাই তুমি দিন গুণচো—আর বোন্, মনের কথা বের্‌য়ে পড়েছে!

সর। মাইরি দিদি আমি তা ভেবে জিজ্ঞাসা করি নি—মাইরি।

সৈরি। ঠাকুরপোর আমার কি সুচরিত্র, কি মধুমাখা কথা! ওঁরা যখন ঠাকুরপোর চিটিগুলিন পড়েন যেন অমৃত বর্ষণ হইতে থাকে। দাদার প্রতি এমন ভক্তি কখন দেখি নি। দাদারি বা কি স্নেহ, বিন্দুমাধবের নামে মুখে লাল পড়ে,

আর বুকখান পাঁচহাত হয়। আমার যেমন ঠাকুরপো তেমনি ছোট বউ— (সরলতার গাল টিপে) সরলতা তো সরলতা—আমি কি তামাকপোড়ার কটোটা আনি নি, যেমন একদণ্ড তামাকপোড়া নইলে বাঁচি নে তেমনি কটোটা যেন আগে ভুলে এসিছি।

আদুরীর প্রবেশ

ও আদর, তামাকপোড়ার কটোটা আন্ না দিদি।

আদুরী। মুই অ্যাকন কনে খুঁজে মরবো?

সৈরি। ওরে, রান্নাঘরের রকে উঠ্‌তে ডান দিকে চালের বাতায় গোঁজা আছে।

আদুরী। তবে খামাত্তে মোইখান আনি, তা নলি চালে ওটবো ক্যামন করো্যে।

সর। বেশ বুঝেছে।

সৈরি। কেন, ও তো ঠাকুরুণের কথা বেশ বুঝতে পারে? তুই রক কারে বলে জানিস নে, তুই ডান বুঝিস নে?

আদুরী। মুই ডান হতি গ্যালাম ক্যান। মোগার কপালের দোষ, গোরিব নোকের মেয়ে যদি বুড়ো হলো আর দাঁত পড়লো, তবেই সে ডান হয়ে ওটলো। মাঠাকুরুণিরি বলবো দিনি, মুই কি ডান হবার মত বুড়ো হইচি।

সৈরি। মরণ আর কি! (গাত্রোত্থান করিয়া) ছোট বউ বসিস, আমি আস্‌চি, বিদ্যাসাগরের বেতাল শুন্‌বো।

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রস্থান

আদুরী। সেই সাগর নাড়ের বিয়ে দেয়, ছ্যা—নাকি দুটো দল হয়েছে, মুই আজাদের দলে।

সর। হ্যাঁ আদুরী, তোর ভাতার তোরে ভাল বাস্‌তো?

আদুরী। ছোট হালদার্ণি, সে খ্যাদের কথা আর তুলিস নে। মিন্‌সের মুখখান মনে পড়লি আজো মোর পরাণডা ডুক্‌রে ক্যাঁদে ওটে। মোরে বড়্ডি ভাল বাস্‌তো। মোরে বাউ দিতি চেয়েলো।

পুঁইচে কি এত ভারি রে প্রাণ, পুঁইচে কি এত ভারি।
মনের মত হলি পরে বাউ পরাতি পারি॥

দেখদিনি খাটে কি না, মোরে ঘুমুতি দিত না, ঝিমুলি বল্‌তো, "ও পরাণ ঘুমুলে।"

সর। তুই ভাতারের নাম ধর‍্যে ডাকতিস।

আদুরী। ছি, ছি, ছি, ভাতার যে গুরুনোক, নাম ধত্তি আছে।

সর। তবে তুই কি বল্যে ডাকতিস?

আদুরী। মুই বল্‌তাম, হ্যাদে ওয়ো শোন্‌চো—

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর পুনঃ প্রবেশ

সৈরি। আবার পাগলীকে কে খ্যাপালে?

আদুরী। মোর মিন্‌সের কথা সুদুচ্চেন তাই মুই বল্‌তি লেগিচি।

সৈরি। (হাস্যবদনে) ছোট বয়ের মত পাগল আর দুটি নাই, এত জিনিস থাক্‌তে আদুরীর ভাতারের গল্প ঘাঁটিয়ে২ শোনা হচ্চে।

রেবতী ও ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রবেশ

আয় ঘোষদিদি আয়, তোকে আজ ক দিন ডেকে পাঠাচ্চি তা তোর আর বার হয় না। ছোট বউ এই নাও, তোমার ক্ষেত্রমণি এসেছে, আজ ক দিন আমারে পাগল করেছে, বলে—দিদি, ঘোষদের ক্ষেত্র শ্বশুরবাড়ী হতে এসেছে তা আমারদের বাড়ী এল না?

রেবতী। তা মোদের পত্তি এম্‌নি কের্‌পা বটে। ক্ষেত্র, তোর কাকি মাদ্দের পর্‌ণাম কর।

ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রণাম

সৈরি। জন্মায়তি হও, পাকা চুলে সিন্দূর পর, হাতের ন ক্ষয় যাক, ছেলে কোলে করে শ্বশুরবাড়ী যাও।

আদুরী। মোর কাছে ছোট হালদার্ণির মুখি খোই ফুট্‌তি থাকে—মেয়েডা গড় কল্লে, তা বাঁচো মরো একটা কথাও কলে না।

সৈরি। বালাই ষেটের বাছা—আদুরী, যা ঠাকুরুণকে ডেকে আন্ গে।

আদুরীর প্রস্থান

পোড়াকপালি কি বলিতে কি বলে তা কিছু বোঝে না,—ক মাস হলো?

রেবতী। ও কথা কি আজো দিদি পর্‌কাশ করিছি। মোর যে ভাঙ্গা কপাল, সত্যি কি মিথ্যে তাই বা কেমন করে জানবো। তোমরা আপনার জন তাই বলি—এই মাসের কড়া দিন গেলি চার মাসে পড়বে।

সর। আজো পেট বেরোই নি।

সৈরি। এই আর এক পাগল, আজো তিন মাস পূরি নি ও এখনি পেট ডাগর হইয়াছে কি না তাই দেখ্‌চে।

সর। ক্ষেত্র তুমি ঝাপটা তুলে ফেলেছ কেন?

ক্ষেত্র। মোর ঝাপটা দেখে মোর ভাশুর বড় খাপা হয়েলো, ঠাকুরুণির বল্লে ঝাপটা কাটা কস্‌বিদের আর বড় নোকের মেয়েগার সাজে। মুই শুনে নজ্জায় মর্‌য়ে গ্যালাম, সেই দিনি ঝাপটা তুলে ফ্যাল্‌লাম।

সৈরি। ছোট বউ, যাও দিদি কাপড়গুনো তুলে আন গে, সন্ধ্যা হলো।

আদুরীর পুনঃ প্রবেশ

সর। (দাঁড়ায়ে) আয় আদুরী ছাদে গিয়ে কাপড় তুলি।

আদুরী। ছোট হালদার আগে বাড়ীই আসুক, হা, হা, হা, হা।

সরলতার জিব কেটে প্রস্থান

সৈরি। (সরোষে এবং হাস্যবদনে) দূর পোড়াকপালি, সকল কথাতেই তামাসা—ঠাকুরুণ কই লো—

সাবিত্রীর প্রবেশ

এই এসেছেন।

সবি। ঘোষবউ এইচিস্, তোর মেয়ে এনিচিস্ বেশ করিচিস্—বিপিন আবদার নিচ্‌লো তাকে শান্ত কর্‌য়ে বাইরে দিয়ে এলাম।

রেবতী। মাঠাকুরুণ পর্‌ণাম করি। ক্ষেত্র তোর দিদিমারে পর্‌ণাম কর।

ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রণাম

সাবি। সুখে থাক, সাত বেটার মা হও—(নেপথ্যে কাশি) বড় বউ মা ঘরে যাও, বাবার বুঝি নিদ্রা ভেঙ্গেছে—আহা! বাছার কি সময়ে নাওয়া আছে না সময়ে খাওয়া আছে, ভেবে ভেবে নবীন আমার পাতখানি হয়ে গিয়েছে—(নেপথ্যে "আদুরী") মা যাও গো জল চাচ্চেন বুঝি।

সৈরি। (জনান্তিকে আদুরীর প্রতি) আদুরী তোরে ডাক্‌চে।

আদুরী। ডাক্‌চেন মোরে, কিন্তু চাচ্চেন তোমারে।

সৈরি। পোড়ার মুখ—ঘোষদিদি আর এক দিন আসিস।

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রস্থান

রেবতী। মাঠাকুরুণ, আর তো এখানে কেউ নেই—মুই তো বড় আপদে পড়িছি, পদী ময়রাণী কাল মোদের বাড়ী এয়েলো—

সাবি। রাম রাম রাম, ও নচ্ছার বেটীকেও কেউ বাড়ী আস্‌তে দেয়— বেটীর আর বাকি আছে কি, নাম লেখালেই হয়।

রেবতী। মা, তা মুই কর্‌বো কি, মোর তো আর ঘেরা বাড়ী নয়, মর্‌দেরা ক্ষ্যাতে খামারে গেলি বাড়ী বল্লিই বা কি আর হাট বল্লিই বা কি—গস্তানি বিটী বলে কি—মা মোর গাড়া কাঁটা দিয়ে ওট্‌চে—বিটী বলে, ক্ষেত্রকে ছোট সাহেব ঘোড়া চেপে যাতি যাতি দেখে পাগল হয়েচে, আর তার সঙ্গে একবার কুটির কামরাঙ্গার ঘরে যাতি বলেচে।

আদুরী। থু, থু, থু!—গোন্দো! প্যাঁজির গোন্দো!—সাহেবের কাছে কি মোরা যাতি পারি, গোন্দো থু থু! প্যাজির গোন্দো!—মুই তো আর একা বেরোব না, মুই *সব সইতি পারি প্যাঁজির গোন্দো সইতি পারি নে—থু, থু, গোন্দো! প্যাঁজির গোন্দো!*

রেবতী। মা, তা গোরিবের ধর্ম্ম কি ধর্ম্ম নয়? বিটী বলে, টাকা দেবে, ধানের জমি ছেড়ে দেবে, আর জামাইরি কর্ম্ম করো্য দেবে—পোড়া কপাল টাকার। ধর্ম্ম কি ব্যাচ্‌বার জিনিস, না এর দাম আছে। কি বল্‌বো, বিটী সাহেবের নোক, তা নইলি মেয়ে নাতি দিয়ে মুখ ভেঙ্গে দিতাম। মেয়ে আমার অবাক্ হয়েছে, কাল থেকে ঝম্‌কে২ ওট্‌চে।

আদুরী। মা গো যে দাড়ি! কথা কয় যেন বোকা ছাগলে ফ্যাবা মারে। দাড়ি প্যাঁজ না ছাড়লি মুই তো কখনুই যাতি পারবো না, থু, থু, থু! গোন্দো, প্যাঁজির গোন্দো!

রেবতী। মা সর্ব্বনাশী বলে, যদি মোর সঙ্গে না পেট্‌য়ে দিস্ তবে নেটেলা দিয়ে ধরো্য নিয়ে যাবে।

সাবি। মগের মুল্লুক আর কি!—ইংরেজের রাজ্যে কেউ না কি ঘর ভেঙ্গে মেয়ে কেড়ে নিয়ে যেতে পারে।

রেবতী। মা, চাসার ঘরে সব পারে। মেয়েনোক ধরে মরদ্দের কায়দা করে, নীল দাঁদনে এ কত্তি পারে, নজোরে ধল্লি কত্তি পারে না? মা, জান না, নয়দারা

রাজিনামা দিতি চাই নি বল্যে ওদের মেজো বউরি ঘর ভেঙ্গে ধর্‌্যে নিয়ে গিয়েলো।

সাবি। কি অরাজক! সাধুকে এ কথা বলেছ?

রেবতী। না, মা, সে অ্যাকিই নীলির ঘায় পাগল, তাতে এ কথা শুনে কি আর রক্ষা রাখ্‌বে, রাগের মাথায় আপনার মাথায় আপনি কুড়ুল মেরে বসবে।

সাবি। আচ্ছা, আমি কত্তাকে দিয়ে এ কথা সাধুকে বলবো, তোমার কিছু বলবার আবশ্যক নেই—কি সর্ব্বনাশ! নীলকর সাহেবেরা সব কত্তে পারে, তবে যে বলে সাহেবেরা বড় সুবিচার করে, আমার বিন্দু যে সাহেবদের কত ভাল বলে, তা এরা কি সাহেব না, না এরা সাহেবদের চণ্ডাল।

রেবতী। ময়রাণী বিটী আর এক কথা বল্যে গ্যাল, তা বুঝি বড়বাবু শুনিন্ নি—কি একটা নতুন হুকুম হয়েছে, তাতে না কি কুটেল সাহেবরা মাচেরটক্ সাহেবের সঙ্গে যোগ দিয়ে যাকে তাকে ৬ মাস ম্যাদ দিতি পারে। তা কর্ত্তা মশাইরি না কি এই ফাঁদে ফ্যালবার পথ কচ্চে।

সাবি। (দীর্ঘ নিশ্বাস ফেলিয়া) ভগবতীর মনে যদি তাই থাকে, হবে।

রেবতী। মা, কত কথা বল্যে গ্যাল, তা কি আমি বুঝ্‌তি পারি, না কি এ ম্যাদের পিল্ হয় না—

আদুরী। ম্যাদেরে বুঝি পেটপোড়া খেব্‌য়েচে।

সাবি। আদুরী, তুই একটু চুপ কর বাছা।

রেবতী। কুটির বিবি এই মকদ্দমা পাকাবার জন্যি মাচেরটক্ সাহেবকে চিঠি ন্যাকেচে, বিবির কথা হাকিব না কি বড্ডো শোনে—

আদুরী। বিবিরি আমি দেখিছি, নজ্জাও নেই, সরমও নেই—জ্যালার হাকিম মাচেরটক্ সাহেব, কত নাঙ্গা পাক্‌ড়ি, তেরোনাল ফির্‌তি থাকে, মা গো নাম কল্লি প্যাটের মধ্যি হাত পা সেঁদোয়—এই সাহেবের সঙ্গি ঘোড়া চেপে ব্যাড়াতি এয়েলো। বউ মান্‌সি ঘোড়া চাপে!—কেশের কাকি ঘরের ভাশুরির সঙ্গি হেঁসে কথা কয়েলো, তাই নোকে কত নজ্জা দেলে, এ তো জ্যালার হাকিম।

সাবি। তুই আবাগী কোন্ দিন মজাবি দেক্‌চি। তা সন্ধ্যা হলো, ঘোষবউ তোরা বাড়ী যা, দুর্গা আছেন।

রেবতী। যাই মা, আবার কলুবাড়ী দিয়ে তেল নিয়ে যাব, তবে সাঁজ জ্বলবে।

রেবতী ও ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রস্থান

সাবি। তোর কি সকল কথায় কথা না কইলে চলে না।

সরলতার কাপড় মাথায় করিয়া প্রবেশ

আদুরী। এই যে ধোপাবউ কাপড় নিয়ে আলেন।

সরলতার জিব কেটে কাপড় রাখন

সাবি। ধোপাবউ কেন হতে গেল লা, আমার সোনার বউ, আমার রাজলক্ষ্মী। (পৃষ্ঠে হস্ত দিয়া) হ্যাঁগা মা, তুমি বই কি আর আমার কাপড় আনিবার মানুষ নাই--তুমি কি এক জায়গায় ১ দণ্ড স্থির হয়ে বসে থাক্‌তে পার না—এমন পাগ্‌লির পেটেও তোমার জন্ম হয়েছিল—কাপড়ডায় ফালা দিলে কেমন করে, তবে বোধ করি গায়েও ছড় গিয়াছে—আহা! মার আমার রক্তকমলের মত রং, একটু ছড় লেগেছে যেন রক্ত ফুটে বেরোচ্চে। তুমি মা আর অন্ধকার সিড়ি দিয়ে অমন কর্য়ে যাওয়া আসা করো না।

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রবেশ

সৈরি। আয় ছোটবউ ঘাটে যাই।

সাবি। যাও মা, দুই যায়ে এই বেলা বেলা থাক্‌তে২ গা ধুয়ে এস।

সকলের প্রস্থান

দ্বিতীয় অঙ্ক

প্রথম গর্ভাঙ্ক

বেগুণবেড়ের কুটির গুদামঘর

তোরাপ ও আর চারি জন রাইয়ত উপবিষ্ট

তোরাপ। ম্যারে ক্যান ফ্যালায় না, মুই নেমোখ্যারামি কত্তি পার্‌বো না—ঝে বড়বাবুর জন্যি জাত বাঁচেচে, ঝার হিল্লেয় বস্‌তি কত্তি নেগিচি, ঝে বড়বাবু হাল গোরু বেঁচ্‌য়ে নে ব্যাড়াচ্চে, মিত্যে সাক্ষী দিয়ে সেই বড়বাবুর বাপ্‌কে কয়েদ করে দেব। মুই তো কখনুই পার্‌বো না—জান্ কবুল।

প্রথম রাই। কুঁদির মুখি বাঁক্ থাক্‌বে না, শ্যামচাঁদের ঠ্যালা বড় ঠ্যালা। মোদের চকি কি আর চামড়া নেই, না মোরা বড়বাবুর নুন খাই নি—তা করবো কি, সাক্ষী না দিলি যে আস্ত রাখে না—উট সাহেব মোর বুকি দেঁড়্‌য়ে উটেলো—দ্যাদিনি অ্যাকন তবাদি অক্তে ঝোজানি দিয়ে পড়্‌চে—গোড়ার পা ঝ্যান বল্‌দে গোরুর খুর।

দ্বিতীয়। প্যারেকের খোঁচা—সাহেবেরা যে প্যারেকমারা জুতো পরে জানিস্ নে?

তোরাপ। (দন্ত কিড়্‌মিড়্ করিয়া) দুত্তোর প্যারেকের মার প্যাট কর্‌য়ে, লৌ দেখে গাড়া মোর ঝাঁকি মেরে ওট্‌চে। উঃ কি বল্‌বো, সমিন্দিরি অ্যাকবার ভাতারমারির মাটে পাই, এম্‌নি থাপ্পোড় ঝাঁকি, সমিন্দির চাবালিডে আসমানে উড়্‌য়ে দেই, ওর গ্যাড় ম্যাড় করা হের ভেতর দে বার করি।

তৃতীয়। মুই টিকিরি—জোন খাটে খাই। মুই কত্তা মশার সলা শুনে নীল কল্লাম না, বল্লি তো খাটবে না, তবে মোরে গুদোমে পোর্‌লে ক্যান—তানার সেমনতোনের দিন ঘুন্‌য়ে এস্‌তেচে, ভেবেলাম এই হিড়িকি খাটে কিছু পুঁজি করবো, কর্‌য়ে সেমনতোনের সমে পাঁচ কুটুম্বুর খবর নেব, তা গুদোমে ৫ দিন পচ্‌তি লেগিচি, আবার ঠ্যাল্‌বে সেই আন্দারবাদ।

দ্বিতীয়। আন্দারবাদে মুই অ্যাকবার গিয়েলাম—ঐ যে ভাবনাপুরীর কুটি, যে কুটির সাহেবডারে সক্‌লি ভাল বলে—ঐ সুমুন্দি মোরে অ্যাকবার ফৌজদুরিতি

ঠেলেলো। মুই সেবের কেচ্‌রির ভেতর অনেক তাম্‌সা দেখেলাম। ওয়াঃ! ন্যাজের কাছে বসে মাচেরটক্‌ সাহেব যেই হ্যাল মেরেছে, দুই সুমুন্দি মোক্তার ওমনি র, র, কর্য়ে অ্যাসেছে, হেড়া হেড়ি যে কত্তি নেগলো, মুই ভাবলাম ময়নার মাটে সাদখাঁদের ধলা দামড়া আর জমাদ্দারদের বুদো এঁড়ের নড়ুই বেদ্‌লো।

তোরাপ। তোর দোষ পেয়েলো কি? ভাবনাপুরীর সাহেব তো মিছে হ্যাংনামা করে না। সাচা কথা কবো, ঘোড়া চড়ে যাব। সব সমিন্দি যদি ঐ সমিন্দির মত হতো, তা হলি সমিন্দিগার এত বদনাম নট্‌অে না।

দ্বিতীয়। আহ্লাদে যে আর বাঁচি নে গা—

ভাল২ করে গ্যালাম কেলোর মার কাছে।
কেলোর মা বলে আমার জামার সঙ্গে আছে

এব্‌রেও সুমিন্দির ইক্‌সুল করা বেইরে গেছে, সুমিন্দির গুদোম্‌তে সাত্তটা রেয়েত্‌ বেইরেছে। অ্যাকটা নিচু ছেলে। সুমিন্দি গাই বাচুর গুদোমে ভরেলো—সুমুন্দি যে ঘোঁটা মাত্তি লেগেছে, বাবা!

তোরাপ। সমিন্দিরে ভাল মানুষ পালি খ্যাতি আসে, মাচেরটক্‌ সাহেবডারে গাংপার করবার কোমেট্‌ কত্তি লেগেচে।

দ্বিতীয়। এ জেলার মাচেরটক্‌ না-–ও জেলার মাচেরটকের দোষ পালে কি তাও তো বুঝ্‌তি পারচি নে।

তোরাপ। কুটি খাতি যাই নি। হাকিমডেরে গাঁতবার জন্যি খানা পেক্‌য়েলো, হাকিমডে চোরা গোরুর মত পেল্‌য়ে রলো, খাতি গেল না—ওডা বড়নোকের ছাবাল, নীল মামদোর বাড়ী যাবে ক্যান। মুই ওর অন্‌তেরা পেইচি, এ সমিন্দিরে বেলাতের ছোটনোক!

প্রথম। তবে এগোনের গারনাল সাহেব কুটি২ আইবুড়ো ভাত খেয়ে বেড়্‌য়েলো ক্যামন করে? দেখিস্‌ নি, সুমুন্দিরে গোঁট বেঁদে তাঁনারে বর সেজ্‌য়ে মোদের কুটিতি এনেলো?

দ্বিতীয়। তানার বুঝি ভাগ ছেল।

তোরাপ। ওরে না, লাট সাহেব কি নীলির ভাগ নিতি পারে। তিনি নাম কিন্‌তি এয়েলেন। হালের গারনাল সাহেবডারে যদি খোদো বেঁচ্‌য়ে নাকে, মোরা প্যাটের ভাত কর্য়ে খাতি পারবো, আর সমিন্দির নীল মামদো ঘাড়ে চাপ্‌তি পার্‌বে না—

তৃতীয়। (সভয়ে) মুই তবে মলাম, মামদো ভূতি পালি না কি ঝক্কোতে ছাড়ে না? বউ যে বলেলো।

তোরাপ। এ মান্নির ভাইরি আনেচে ক্যান? মান্নির ভাই নচা কথা সোমোজ কত্তি পারে না—সাহেবগার ডরে নোক সব গাঁছাড়া হতি নেগলো, তাই বচোরদ্দি নানা নচে দিয়েলো—

ব্যারালচোকো হাঁদা হেম্‌দো।
নীলকুটির নীল মেমদো॥

বচোরদ্দি নানা কবি নচ্‌তি খুব।

দ্বিতীয়। নিতে আতাই একটা নচেচে শুনিস্ নি।

"জাত মাল্লে পাদরি ধরে।
ভাত মাল্লে নীল বাঁদরে॥"

তোরাপ। এওল নচন নচেচে; "জাত মাল্লে" কি?

"জাত মাল্লে পাদরি ধরে।
ভাত মাল্লে নীল বাঁদরে॥"

চতুর্থ। হা! মোর বাড়ী যে কি হতি নেগেচে তা কিছুই জান্‌তি পাল্লাম না —মুই হলাম ভিনগাঁর রেয়েত, মুই স্বরপুর আলাম কবে, তা, বস মশার সলায় পড়ে দাদন ঝ্যাড়ে ফ্যাল্‌লাম? মোর কোলের ছেলেডার গা তেতো করেলো তাইতি বস মশার কাছে মিচ্‌রি নিতি অ্যাকবার স্বরপুর আয়েলাম। আহা কি দয়ার শরীল, কি চেহারার চটক, কি অরপুরুষ রূপী দেখেলাম, বসে আছেন য্যান গজেন্দ্রগামিনী।

তোরাপ। এবার ক কুড়ো ঢুক্‌য়েচে?

চতুর্থ। গ্যাল বার দশ কুড়ো করেলাম, তায় দাম দিতি আদাখ্যাচ্‌ড়া কল্লে —এবারে ১৫ বিঘের দাদন গতিয়েছে, ঝা বল্‌চে তাই কচ্চি তবু তো ব্যাভ্রম কত্তি ছাড়ে না।

প্রথম। মুই দু বচ্ছোর ধরে নাঙ্গল দিয়ে এক বন্দ জমি তোল্লাম, এই বারে যো হয়েলো, তিলির জন্যিই জমিডে রেখেলাম, সে দিন ছোট সাহেব ঘোড়া চাপে অ্যাসে দেঁড়য়ে থেকে জমিডেয় মার্গ মারালে। চাসার কি আর বাচন আছে?

তোরাপ। এডা কেবল আমিন সমিন্দির হির্‌ভিতি। সাহেব কি সব জমির খবর নাকে। ঐ সমিন্দি সব টুঁড়ে বার করে দেয়। সমিন্দি য্যান হন্নে কুকুরের

মত ঘুরে ব্যাড়ায়, ভাল জমিডে দ্যাখে, ওমনি সাহেবের মার্গ মারে। সাহেবের তো ট্যাকার কাম নি, ওর তো আর মহাজন কত্তি হয় না, সুমিন্দি তবে ওমন করে মরে ক্যান—নীল কর্‌বি তা কর, দামড়া গোরু কেন, নাঙ্গল বেন্‌য়ে নে. নিজি না চস্‌তি পারিস মেইন্দার রাখ, তোর জমির কমি কি, গাঁকে গাঁ ক্যান চসে ফ্যাল না, মোরা গাঁতা দিতি তো নারাজ নই, তা হলি দু সনে নীল যে ছেপ্‌য়ে উট্‌তি পারে, সমিন্দি তা কর্‌বে না, মান্নির ভার নেয়েতের হেই বড় মিষ্টি নেগেচে, তাই চোস্‌চেন, তাই চোস্‌চেন—(নেপথ্যে হো, হো; হো মা, মা) গাজিসাহেব, গাজিসাহেব, দরগা, দরগা, তোরা আম নাম কর. এডার মধ্যি ভূত আছে। চুপ দে চুপ দে—

(নেপথ্যে—হা নীল! তুমি আমারদিগের সর্ব্বনাশের জন্যেই এদেশে এসেছিলে—আহা! এ যন্ত্রণা যে আর সহ্য হয় না. এ কান্‌সারনের আর কত কুটি আছে না জানি. দেড় মাসের মধ্যে ১৪ কুটির জল খেলেম. এখন কোন্ কুটিতে আছি তাও তো জানিতে পারিলাম না. জানিবই বা কেমন করে, রাত্রিযোগে চক্ষু বন্ধন করিয়া এক কুটি হইতে অন্য কুটি লইয়া যায়, উঃ মা গো তুমি কোথায়)

তৃতীয়। আম, আম, আম, কালী, কালী, দুর্গা, গণেশ, অসুর!—

তোরাপ। চুপ, চুপ।

(নেপথ্যে। আহা! ৫ বিঘা হারে দাদন লইলেই এ নরক হইতে ত্রাণ পাই—হে মাতুল! দাদন লওয়াই কর্ত্তব্য। সংবাদ দিবার তো আর উপায় দেখি নে, প্রাণ ওষ্ঠাগত হয়েছে, কথা কহিবার শক্তি নাই, মা গো! তোমার চরণ দেড় মাস দেখি নি।)

তৃতীয়। বউরি গিয়ে এ কথা বলবো—শুনলি তো মর্‌্যো ভূত হয়েচে তবু দাদনের হাত ছাড়াতি পারি নি।

প্রথম। তুই মিন্‌সে এমন হেব্‌লো—

তোরাপ। ভাল মান্‌সির ছাবাল—মুই কথায় জান্‌তি পেরিছি—পরাণে চাচা, মোরে কাঁদে কত্তি পারিস, মুই ঝরকা দিয়ে ওরে পুছ করি ওর বাড়ী কনে—

প্রথম। তুই যে নেড়ে।

তোরাপ। তবে তুই মোর কাঁদে উটে দ্যাক—(বসিয়া) ওট—(কান্ধে উঠন) দ্যাল ধরিস্, ঝরকার কাছে মুখ নিয়ে যা—(গোপীনাথকে দূরে দেখিয়া) চাচা লাব, চাচা লাব, গুপে সুমিন্দি আস্‌চে। (প্রথম রাইয়তের ভূমিতে পতন)

গোপীনাথ ও রামকান্ত হস্তে করিয়া রোগ সাহেবের প্রবেশ

তৃতীয়। দেওয়ানজি মশাই, এই ঘরডার মধ্যি ভুত আছে! এত বেল কান্‌তি নেগেলো।

গোপী। তুই যদি যেমন শিখাইয়া দেই তেমনি না বলিস্ তবে তুই ওমনি ভূত হবি। (জনান্তিকে রোগের প্রতি) মজুমদারের বিষয় এরা জানিয়েছে, এ কুটিতে আর রাখা নয়। ও ঘরে রাখাই অবিধি হইয়াছিল।

রোগ। ও কথা পরে শোনা যাবে। নারাজ আছে কে, কোন্ বজ্জাত নষ্ট? (পায়ের শব্দ)

গোপী। এরা সব দোরস্ত হয়েছে। এই নেড়ে বেটা ভারি হারামজাদা, বলে নেমক্‌হারামি করিতে পারিব না।

তোরাপ। (স্বগত) বাবা রে! যে নাদ্‌না, অ্যাকন তো নাজি হই, ত্যাকন ঝা জানি তা কর্‌বো। (প্রকাশে) দোই সাহেবের, মুইও সোদা হইচি।

রোগ। চপরাও, শূয়ারকি বাচ্চা! রামকান্ত বড় মিষ্টি আছে। (রামকান্তাঘাত এবং পায়ের গুঁতা)

তোরাপ। আল্লা! মা গো গ্যালাম, পরাণে চাচা এট্টু জল দে, মুই পানি তিসেয় মলাম, বাবা, বাবা, বাবা—

রোগ। তোর মুখে পেসাব করে দেবে না? (জুতার গুঁতা)

তোরাপ। মোরে ঝা বলবা মুই তাই কর্‌বো—দোই সাহেবের, দোই সাহেবের, খোদার কসম।

রোগ। বাঞ্চতের হারামজাদ্‌কি ছেড়েছে। আজ রাত্রে সব চালান দেবে। মুক্তিয়ারকে লেখ, সাক্ষ্য আদায় না হোলে কেউ বাইরে যেতে না পায়। পেস্কার সঙ্গে যাবে—(তৃতীয় রাইয়তের প্রতি) তোম রোতা হায় কাহে? (পায়ের গুঁতা)

তৃতীয়। বউ তুই কনে রে, মোরে খুন কর্‌য়ে ফ্যালালে, মা রে, বউ রে, মা রে, মেলে রে, মেলে রে (ভূমিতে চিত হইয়া পতন)

রোগ। বাঞ্চৎ বাউরা হ্যায়।

রোগের প্রস্থান

গোপী। কেমন তোরাপ প্যাঁজ পয়জার দুই তো হলো।

তোরাপ। দেওয়ানজি মশাই, মোরে এট্টু পানি দিয়ে বাঁচাও, মুই মলাম।

গোপী। বাবা নীলের গুদাম, ভাবরার ঘর, ঘামও ছোটে জলও খাওয়ায়। আয় তোরা সকলে আয়, তোদের একবার জল খাইয়ে আনি।

সকলের প্রস্থান

দ্বিতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

বিন্দুমাধবের শয়নঘর

লিপিহস্তে সরলতা উপবিষ্ট

সর। সরলা ললনা জীবন এল না।
কমল হৃদয় দ্বিরদ দলনা॥

বড় আশায় নিরাশ হলেম। প্রাণেশ্বরের আগমন প্রতীক্ষায় নবসলিলশীকরাকাঙ্ক্ষিণী চাতকিনী অপেক্ষাও ব্যাকুল হয়ে ছিলাম। দিন গণনা করিতেছিলাম যে দিদি বলেছিলেন, তা তো মিথ্যা নয়, আমার এক এক দিন এক এক বৎসর গিয়েছে। (দীর্ঘ নিশ্বাস) নাথের আসার আশা তো নির্মূল হইল, এক্ষণে যে মহৎ কার্য্যে প্রবৃত্ত হয়েছেন তাহাতে সফল হইলেই তাঁর জীবন সার্থক —প্রাণেশ্বর, আমাদের নারীকুলে জন্ম, আমরা পাঁচ বয়স্যায় একত্রে উদ্যানে যাইতে পারি না, আমরা নগর ভ্রমণে অক্ষম, আমাদিগের মঙ্গলসূচক সভা স্থাপন সম্ভবে না, আমাদের কালেজ নাই, কাছারী নাই, ব্রাহ্মসমাজ নাই—রমণীর মন কাতর হইলে বিনোদনের কিছুমাত্র উপায় নাই, মন অবোধ হইলে মনের তো দোষ দিতে পারি না। প্রাণনাথ আমাদের একমাত্র অবলম্বন—স্বামীই ধ্যান, স্বামীই জ্ঞান, স্বামীই অধ্যয়ন, স্বামীই উপার্জ্জন, স্বামীই সভা, স্বামীই সমাজ, স্বামিরত্নই সতীর সর্ব্বস্বধন। হে লিপি, তুমি আমার হৃদয়বল্লভের হস্ত হইতে আসিয়াছ, তোমাকে চুম্বন করি (লিপি চুম্বন) তোমাতে আমার প্রাণকান্তের নাম লেখা আছে, তোমাকে তাপিত বক্ষে ধারণ করি (বক্ষে ধারণ) আহা! প্রাণনাথের কি অমৃত বচন, পত্রখানি যত পড়ি ততই মন মোহিত হয়, আর একবার পড়ি (পঠন)

প্রাণের সরলা।

তোমার মুখারবিন্দ দেখিবার জন্য আমার প্রাণ যে কি পর্য্যন্ত ব্যাকুল হইয়াছে, তাহা পত্রে ব্যক্ত করা যায় না। তোমার চন্দ্রানন বক্ষে ধারণ করিয়া আমি কি অনির্ব্বচনীয় সুখ লাভ করি। মনে করিয়াছিলাম সেই সুখের সময় আসিয়াছে, কিন্তু হরিষে বিষাদ, কালেজ বন্ধ হইয়াছে, কিন্তু বড় বিপদে

পড়িয়াছি, যদি পরমেশ্বরের আনুকূল্যে উত্তীর্ণ হইতে না পারি, তবে আর মুখ দেখাইতে পারিব না। নীলকর সাহেবেরা গোপনে২ পিতার নামে এক মিথ্যা মোকদ্দমা করিয়াছে, তাহাদের বিশেষ যত্ন তিনি কোনরূপে কারাবদ্ধ হন। দাদা মহাশয়কে এ সংবাদ আনুপূর্ব্বিক লিখিয়া আমি এখানকার তদবিরে রহিলাম। তুমি কিছু ভাবনা করো না, করুণাময়ের কৃপায় অবশ্যই সফল হইবে। প্রেয়সি, আমি তোমার বঙ্গভাষার সেক্সপিয়ারের কথা ভুলি নাই, এক্ষণ বাজারে পাওয়া যায় না, কিন্তু প্রিয়বয়স্য বঙ্কিম তাঁহার খান দিয়াছেন বাড়ী যাইবার সময় লইয়া যাইব—বিধুমুখি, লেখাপড়ার সৃষ্টি কি সুখের আকর, এত দূরে থাকিয়াও তোমার সহিত কথা কহিতেছি। আহা! মাতাঠাকুরাণী যদি তোমার লিখনের প্রতি আপত্তি না করিতেন তবে তোমার লিপিসুধা পান করে আমার চিত্তচকোর চরিতার্থ হইত ইতি।

তোমারি বিন্দুমাধব।

আমারি—তাতে আমার সম্পূর্ণ বিশ্বাস আছে, প্রাণেশ্বর, তোমার চরিত্রে যদি দোষ স্পর্শে তবে সুচরিত্রের আদর্শ হবে কে?—আমি স্বভাবতঃ চঞ্চল, এক স্থানে এক দণ্ড স্থির হয়ে বসিতে পারি নে বলে ঠাকুরুণ আমাকে পাগ্‌লির মেয়ে বলেন। এখন আমার যে চাঞ্চল্য কোথায়। যে স্থানে বসে প্রাণপতির পত্র খুলিয়াছি সেই স্থানেই এক প্রহর বসে আছি। আমার উপরের চঞ্চলতা অন্তরে প্রবেশ করিয়াছে। ভাত উথলিয়া ফেনাসমূহে আবৃত হইলে উপরিভাবে স্থির হয়, কিন্তু ভিতরে ফুটিতে থাকে আমি এখন সেইরূপ হইলাম। আর আমার সে হাস্যবদন নাই। হাঁসি সুখের রমণী, সুখের বিনাশে হাঁসির সহমরণ। প্রাণনাথ, তুমি সফল হইলেই সকল রক্ষা, তোমার বিরস বদন দেখিলে আমি দশ দিক্ অন্ধকার দেখি। এ অবোধ মন! তুমি প্রবোধ মানিবে না? তুমি অবোধ হইলে পার আছে, তোমার কান্না কেহ দেখিতে পায় না, কেহ শুনিতেও পায় না কিন্তু নয়ন, তুমিই আমাকে লজ্জা দেবে (চক্ষু মুছিয়ে) তুমি শান্ত না হইলে আমি ঘরের বাহিরে যেতে পারি নে—

আদুরীর প্রবেশ

আদুরী। তুমি কত্তি লেগেচো কি? বড় হালদার্ণি যে ঘাটে যাতি পাচ্চে না, কল্লে কি, ঝার পানে চাই তানার মুখ তোলো হাঁড়ি—

সর। (দীর্ঘনিশ্বাস) চল যাই।

আদুরী। তেলে দেক্‌চি অ্যাকন হাত দেউ নি। চুলগল্লাডা কাদা হতি লেগেচে, চিঠিখান অ্যাকন ছাড় নি—ছোট হালদার ঝ্যাত চিটিতি মোর নাম ন্যাকে দেয়।

সর। বড় ঠাকুর নেয়েছেন?

আদুরী। বড় হালদার যে গাঁয় গ্যাল, জ্যালায় যে মকদ্দমা হতি লেগেছে, তোমার চিটিতি ন্যাকি নি—কত্তামশাই যে কান্‌তি নেগলো।

সর। (স্বগত) প্রাণনাথ, সফল না হইলে যথার্থই মুখ দেখাইতে পারিবে না (প্রকাশে) চল রান্নাঘরে গিয়ে তেল মাখি।

উভয়ের প্রস্থান

তৃতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

স্বরপুর, তেমাথা পথ

পদী ময়রাণীর প্রবেশ

পদী। আমিন আঁটকুড়ির বেটাই তো দেশ মজাচ্চে। আমার কি সাধ, কচি২ মেয়ে সাহেবেরে ধরে দিয়ে আপনার পায় আপনি কুড়ুল মারি—রেয়ে যে খেঁটে এনেছিল, সাধুদাদা না ধরলিই জন্মের মত ভাত কাপড় দিত—আহা! ক্ষেত্রমণির মুখ দেখলে বুক ফেটে যায়—উপপতি করিছি বলে কি আমার শরীরে দয়া নেই—আমারে দেখে ময়রা পিসি, ময়রা পিসি, বলে কাকে আসে। এমন সোণার হরিণ মা না কি প্রাণ ধরে বাঘের মুখে দিতে পারে।—ছোট সাহেবের আর আগায় না, আমি রয়েছি, কলিবুনো রয়েছে—মা গো কি ঘৃণা, টাকার জন্যে জাত জন্ম গেল, বুনোর বিছানা ছুতে হলো, বড় সাহেব ড্যাক্‌রা আমারে দ্যাকমার করেছে, বলে নাক কান কেটে দেবে—ড্যাক্‌রার ভীমরতি হয়েছে, ভাতারখাগীর ভাতার মেয়েমানুষ ধরে গুদোমে রাখতে পারে, মেয়েমানষের পাছায় নাতি মার্‌তে পারে, ড্যাক্‌রার সে রকম তো এক দিন দেখলাম না। যাই আমিন কালামুখরে বলি গে, আমারে দিয়ে হবে না—আমার কি গাঁয় বেরোবার যো আছে, পাড়ার ছেলে আঁটকুড়ির বেটারা আমারে দেখলে যেন কাকের পিছনে ফিঙ্গে লাগে। (নেপথ্যে গীত)

যখন ক্ষ্যাতে, ক্ষ্যাতে বসে ধান কাটি।
মোর মনে জাগে, ও তার নয়ান দুটি।

এক জন রাখালের প্রবেশ

রাখাল। সাহেব, তোমার নীলির চারায় নাকি পোকা ধরেছে?

পদী। তোর মা বনের গে ধরুক, আঁটকুড়ির বেটা, মার কোল ছেড়ে যাও, যমের বাড়ী যাও, কলমিঘাটায় যাও—

রাখাল। মুই দ্বটো নিড়িন গড়াতি দিইচি—

এক জন লাঠিয়ালের প্রবেশ

বাবা রে! কুটির নেটেলা।

রাখালের বেগে পলায়ন

লাঠি। পদ্মমুখি, মিসি মাগ্‌গি কর্য়ে তুল্যে যে।

পদী। (লাঠিয়ালের গোটের প্রতি দৃষ্টি করে) তোর চন্দ্রহারের যে বাহার ভারি।

লাঠি। জান না প্রাণ, প্যায়দার পোশাক, আর নটীর বেশ।

পদী। তোর কাছে একটা কাল বক্‌না চেয়েছিলুম তা তুই আজও দিলি নে। আর কখন তো ভাই তোর কাছে কিছু চাব না।

লাঠি। পদ্মমুখি, রাগ করিস্ নে। আমরা কাল শ্যামনগর লুট্‌তে যাব, যদি কাল কালো বক্‌না পাই, সে তোর গোয়ালঘরে বাঁদা রয়েছে। আমি মাচ নিয়ে যাবার সময় তোর দোকান দিয়ে হয়ে যাব।

লাঠিয়ালের প্রস্থান

পদী। সাহেবদের লুট বই আর কায নাই। কময়ে জময়ে দিলে চাসারাও বাঁচে, তোদেরও নীল হয়। শ্যামনগরের মুন্‌সীরে ১০ খান জমি ছাড়াবার জন্যে কত মিনতি কল্যে। "চোরা না শুনে ধর্ম্মের কাহিনী।" বড় সাহেব পোড়ারমুখো পোড়ারমুখ পুড়েয়ে বসে রলো।

চারি জন পাঠশালার শিশুর প্রবেশ

চারি জন শিশু। (পাততাড়ি রেখে কলতালি দিয়া)

ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥
ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥
ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥

পদী। ছি বাবা কেশব, পিসি হই এমন কথা বলে না।

৪ জন শিশু। (নৃত্য করে)

ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥

পদী। ছি দাদা অম্বিকে, দিদিকে ও কথা বল্‌তে নাই—

৪ জন শিশু। (পদী ময়রাণীকে ঘুরে নৃত্য)

ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥
ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥
ময়রাণী লো সই। নীল গেঁজোছো কই॥

নবীনমাধবের প্রবেশ

পদী। ও মা কি লজ্জা! বড়বাবুকে মুখখানা দেখালাম।

ঘোমটা দিয়া পদীর প্রস্থান

নবীন। দুরাচারিণী, পাপীয়সী,—(শিশুদের প্রতি) তোমরা পথে খেলা করিতেছ, বাড়ী যাও অনেক বেলা হইয়াছে—

৪ জন শিশুর প্রস্থান

আহা! নীলের দৌরাত্ম্য যদি রহিত হয়, তবে আমি পাঁচ দিবসের মধ্যে এই সকল বালকদের পাঠের জন্যে স্কুল স্থাপন করিয়া দিতে পারি। এ প্রদেশের ইনিস্পেক্টর বাবুটি অতি সজ্জন, বিদ্যা জন্মিলে মানুষ কি সুশীল হয়, বাবুজি বয়সে নবীন বটেন, কিন্তু কথায় বিলক্ষণ প্রবীণ। বাবুজির নিতান্ত মানস, এখানে একটি স্কুল স্থাপন হয়। আমি এ মাঙ্গলিক ব্যাপারে অর্থব্যয় করিতে কাতর নই, আমার বড় আটচালা পরিপাটি বিদ্যামন্দির হইতে পারে, দেশের বালকগণ আমার গৃহে বসিয়া বিদ্যার্জ্জন করে, এর অপেক্ষা আর সুখ কি, অর্থের ও পরিশ্রমের সার্থকতাই এই। বিন্দুমাধব, ইনিস্পেক্টর বাবুকে সমভিব্যাহারে আনিয়াছিল, বিন্দুমাধবের ইচ্ছা, গ্রামের সকলেই স্কুল স্থাপনে সমোদ্যোগী হয়। কিন্তু গ্রামের দুর্দ্দশা দেখে ভায়ার মনে কথা মনেই রহিল—বিন্দু আমার কি ধীর, কি শান্ত, কি সুশীল, কি বিজ্ঞ, অল্প বয়সের বিজ্ঞতা চারাগাছের ফলের ন্যায় মনোহর। ভায়া লিপিতে যে খেদোক্তি করিয়াছেন তাহা পাঠ করিলে পাষাণ ভেদ হয়, নীলকরেরও অন্তঃকরণ আর্দ্র হয়।—বাড়ী যাইতে পা উঠে না, উপায় আর কিছু দেখি নে, পাঁচ জনের এক জনও হস্তগত করিতে পারিলাম না, তাহাদের কোথায় লইয়া গিয়াছে কেহই বলিতে পারে না। তোরাপ বোধ করি কখনই মিথ্যা বলিবে না। অপর চারি জন সাক্ষ্য দিলেই সর্ব্বনাশ, বিশেষ আমি এপর্য্যন্ত কোন যোগাড় করিতে পারি নাই, তাহাতে আবার মাজিষ্ট্রেট সাহেব উড সাহেবের পরম বন্ধু।

এক জন রাইয়ত, দুই জন ফৌজদারির পেয়াদা এবং কুটির তাইদদিগের প্রবেশ

রাইয়ত। বড়বাবু, মোর ছেলে দুটোরে দেখো, তাদের খাওয়াবার আর কেউ

নেই—গেল সন আট গাড়ী নীল দেলাম তার একটা পয়সা দেলে না, আবার বকেয়া বাকী বলে হাতে দড়ি দিয়েছে, আবার আন্দারাবাদ নিয়ে যাবে—

তাইদ। নীলের দাদন ধোপার ভ্যালা, এক বার লাগলে আর ওটে না—তুই বেটা চল্, দেওয়াঞ্জির কাছ দিয়ে হোয়ে যেতি হবে। তোর বড়বাবুরও এম্‌নি হবে।

রাইয়ত। চল্ যাব, ভয় করি নে, জেলে পচে মর্‌বো তবু গোড়ার নীল করবো না—হা বিদেতা, হা বিদেতা, কাঙ্গালেরে কেউ দেখে না (ক্রন্দন) বড়বাবু মোর ছেলে দুটোরে খাতি দিও গো, মোরে মাটেত্তে ধরে আন্‌লে তাদের একবার দ্যাক্‌তি পালাম না।

নবীনমাধব ব্যতীত সকলের প্রস্থান

নবীন। কি অবিচার! নবপ্রসূতি শশারু কিরাতের করগত হইলে তাহার শাবকগণ যেমন অনাহারে শুষ্ক হইয়া মরে, সেইরূপ এই রাইয়তের বালকদ্বয় অন্নাভাবে মরিবে।

রাইচরণের প্রবেশ

রাই। দাদা না বল্লিই গোডার মেয়েরে দাম টাসা করেলাম, মেরে তো ফ্যাল্‌তাম, ত্যাকন না হয়, ৬ মাস ফাঁসি য্যাতাম, শালি—

নবীন। ও রাইচরণ, কোথায় যাস?

রাই। মাঠাকুরুণ পুট্‌ঠাকুরকে ডেকে আন্‌তি বল্লে—পদী গুডি বল্লে তলপের প্যায়দা কাল আস্‌বে।

রাইচরণের প্রস্থান

নবীন। হা বিধাতঃ এ বংশে কখন যা না হইয়াছিল তাই ঘটিল—পিতা আমার অতি নিরীহ, অতি সরল, অতি অকপটচিত্ত, বিবাদ বিসম্বাদ কারে বলে জানেন না, কখন গ্রামের বাহির হন না, ফৌজদারির নামে কম্পিত হন, লিপি পাট করে চক্ষের জল ফেলিয়াছিল, ইন্দ্রাবাদে যাইতে হইলে ক্ষিপ্ত হইবেন, কয়েদ হলে জলে ঝাঁপ দিবেন, হা! আমি জীবিত থাকিতে পিতার এই দুর্গতি হবে। মাতা আমার পিতার ন্যায় ভীতা নন, তাঁহার সাহস আছে, তিনি একেবারে হতাশ হন না, তিনি একাগ্রচিত্তে ভগবতীকে ডাকিতেছেন। কুরঙ্গনয়না আমার দাবাগ্নির কুরঙ্গিণী হয়েছেন, ভয়ে ভাবনায় পাগলিনীপ্রায়, নীল কুটির গুদামে তাঁর পিতার পঞ্চত্ব হয়, তাঁর সতত চিন্তা, পাছে পতির সেই গতি ঘটে। আমি কত দিকে

সান্ত্বনা করিব, সপরিবারে পলায়ন করা কি বিধি, না, পরোপকার পরম ধর্ম্ম, সহসা পরাঙ্‌মুখ হব না,—শামনগরের কোন উপকার করিতে পারিলাম না, চেষ্টার অসাধ্য ক্রিয়া কি, দেখি কি করিতে পারে—

দুই জন অধ্যাপকের প্রবেশ

প্রথম। ওহে বাপু, গোলোকচন্দ্র বসুর ভবন এই পল্লীতে বটে—পিতৃব্যের প্রমুখাৎ শ্রুত আছি বসুজ বড় সাধু ব্যক্তি, কায়স্থকুলতিলক।

নবীন। (প্রণিপাত করিয়া) ঠাকুর, আমি তাঁহার জ্যেষ্ঠ পুত্র।

প্রথম। বটে, বটে, আহা হা, সাধু সাধু, এবম্বিধ সুসন্তান সাধারণ পুণ্যের ফল নয়, যেমন বংশ—

"অস্মিংস্তু নির্গুণং গোত্রে নাপত্যমুপজায়তে।
আকরে পদ্মরাগাণাং জন্ম কাচমণেঃ কুতঃ॥"

শাস্ত্রের বচন ব্যর্থ হয় না, তর্কালঙ্কার ভায়া শ্লোকটা প্রণিধান করিলে না, হঃ, হঃ, হঃ, (নস্যগ্রহণ)

দ্বিতীয়। আমার সৌগন্ধ্যার অরবিন্দ বাবুর আহূত, অদ্য গোলোকচন্দ্রের আলয় অবস্থান, তোমারদিগের চরিতার্থ করিব।

নবীন। পরম সৌভাগ্যের বিষয়, এই পথে চলুন।

সকলের প্রস্থান

তৃতীয় অঙ্ক

প্রথম গর্ভাঙ্ক

বেগুণবেড়ের কুটির দপ্তরখানার সম্মুখ

গোপীনাথ ও এক খালাসীর প্রবেশ

গোপী। তোদের ভাগে কম্ না পড়িলে তো আমার কানে কোন কথা তুলিস্ নে।

খালাসী। ও গু কি অ্যাকা খ্যায়ে হজোম করা যায়? মুই বল্লাম, যদি খাবা তবে দেওয়ানজিরি দিয়ে খাও, তা বলে "তোর দেওয়ানের মুরদ বড়, এ ত আর সে ক্যাওটের পুত নয়, যে সাহেবেরে বাঁদর খ্যাল্য়ে নে বেড়াবে।"

গোপী। আচ্ছা তুই এখন যা, কায়েত বাচ্চা কেমন মুগুর তা আমি দেখাব।

খালাসীর প্রস্থান

ছোট সাহেবের জোরে ব্যাটার এত জোর। বোনাই যদি মনিব হয় তবে কর্ম্ম করিতে বড় সুখ, ও কথাও বল্‌বো—বড়সাহেব ওকথায় আগুন হয়, কিন্তু ব্যাটা আমার উপর ভারি চটা, আমারে কথায়২ শ্যামচাঁদ দেখায়। সেদিন মোজা সহিত লাতি মার্‌লে। কয়েক দিন কিছু ভাল ভাল দেখিতছি। গোলোক বসের তলব হওয়া অবধি আমার প্রতি সদয় হইয়াছে। লোকের সর্ব্বনাশ করিতে পারিলেই সাহেবের কাছে পটু হওয়া যায়।

"শতমারী ভবেৎ বৈদ্যঃ।"

উডকে দর্শন করিয়া

এই যে আসিতেছেন, বসেদের কথা বলিয়া অগ্রে মন নরম করি।

উডের প্রবেশ

ধর্ম্মাবতার, নবীন বসের চক্ষে এইবার জল বাহির হইয়াছে। বেটার এমন শাসন কিছুতেই হয় নাই। বেটার বাগান বাহির করিয়া লওয়া গিয়াছে, গাঁতি গদাই পোদকে পাটা করিয়া দেওয়া গিয়াছে, আবাদ এক প্রকার রহিত করা গিয়াছে, বেটার গোলা সব খালি পড়ে রহিয়াছে, বেটাকে দুইবার ফৌজদারিতে সোপর্দ্দ করা গিয়াছে, এত ক্লেশেও বেটা খাড়া ছিল এইবারে একবারে পতন হইয়াছে।

উড। শালা শামনগরে কিছু কত্তে পারি নি।

গোপী। হুজুর, মুন্‌সীরে ওর কাছে এসেছিল তা বেটা বল্লে "আমার মন স্থির নাই, পিতার ক্রন্দনে অঙ্গ অবশ হইয়াছে, আমারে ঘোল বলাইয়াছে।" নবীন বসের দুর্গতি দেখে শ্যামনগরের ৭/৮ ঘর প্রজা ফেরার হইয়াছে আর সকলে হুজুর যেমন হুকুম দিয়াছেন তেমনি করিতেছে।

উড। তুমি আচ্ছা দেওয়ান আছে, ভাল মতলব বার করেছিলে।

গোপী। আমি জানতাম গোলোক বস্ বড় ভীত মানুষ, ফৌজদারিতে যাইতে হইলে পাগল হইবে। নবীন বসের যেমন পিতৃভক্তি তাহা হইলে বেটা কাযে কাযেই শাসিত হইবে, এইজন্যে বুড়োকে আসামী করিতে বল্লাম, হুজুর যে কৌশল বাহির করিয়াছেন তাহাও মন্দ নয়, বেটার পুষ্করিণীর পাড়ে চাস দেওয়া হইয়াছে, উহার অন্তঃকরণে সাপের ডিম পড়িয়াছে।

উড। এক পাথরে দুই পক্ষী মরিল; দশ বিঘা নীল হইল, বাঞ্চতের মনে দুঃখ্ হইল। শালা বড় কাঁদাকাটি করেছিল, বলে পুকুরে নীল হইলে আবার বাস উঠিবে, আমি জবাব দিয়াছি, ভিটা জমিতে নীল বড় ভাল হয়।

গোপী। ঐ জবার পেয়ে বেটা নালিস করিয়াছে।

উড। মোকদ্দমা কিছু হইবে না, এ মাজিষ্ট্রেট বড় ভাল লোক আছে। দেওয়ানী কর্‌লে পাঁচ বচোরে মোকদ্দমা শেষ হোবে না। মাজিষ্ট্রেট আমার বড় দোস্ত। দেখ তোমার সাক্ষী মাটোব্বর কর্য়ে নতুন আইনে চার বজ্জাতকে ফাটক দিয়াছে; এই আইনটা শ্যামচাঁদের দাদা হইয়াছে।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, নবীন বস ঐ চারি জন রাইয়তের ফসল লোকসান হবে বলিয়া আপনার লাঙ্গল গোরু মাইন্দার দিয়া তাহাদের জমি চসিয়া দিতেছে এবং উহাদিগের পরিবারদিগের যাহাতে ক্লেশ না হয় তাহারি চেষ্টা করিতেছে।

উড। শালা দাদনের জমি চসিতে হইলে বলে আমার লাঙ্গল গোরু কমে গিয়েছে, বাঞ্চৎ বড় বজ্জাত, আচ্ছা জব্দ হইয়াছে। দেওয়ান তুমি আচ্ছা কাম করিয়াছ, তোমছে কাম বেহেতার চলেগা!

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতারের অনুগ্রহ। আমার মানস বৎসর২ দাদন বৃদ্ধি করি এ কর্ম্ম একা করিবার নয়, ইহাতে বিশ্বাসী আমিন খালাসী আবশ্যক করে; যে ব্যক্তি দু টাকার জন্য হুজুরের ৩ বিঘা নীল লোক্‌সান করে তার দ্বারা কর্ম্মের উন্নতি হয়?

উড। আমি সম্‌জিয়াছি, আমিন শালা গোলমাল করিয়াছে।

গোপী। হুজুর চন্দ্র গোলদারের এখানে নূতন বাস দাদন কিছু রাখে না, আমি উহার উঠানে রীতিমত এক টাকা দাদন বলিয়া ফেলিয়া দেয়, টাকাটি ফেরত দিবার জন্যে অনেক কাঁদাকাটি করে এবং মিনতি করিতে২ রথতলা পর্য্যন্ত আমিনের সঙ্গে আইসে, রথতলায় নীলকণ্ঠ বাবুর সহিত সাক্ষাৎ হয়, যিনি কালেজ হইতে একেবারে উকীল হইয়া বাহির হইয়াছেন।

উড। আমি ওকে জানি ঐ বাঞ্চৎ আমার কথা খবরের কাগজে লিখিয়া দেয়।

গোপী। আপনাদের কাগজের কাছে উঁহাদের কাগজ দাঁড়াইতে পারে না, তুলনা হয় না, ঢাকাই জালার কাছে ঠাণ্ডা জলের কুঁজো। কিন্তু সংবাদপত্রটি হস্তগত করিতে হুজুরদিগের অনেক ব্যয় হইয়াছে, যেমন সময়,

সময় গুণে আপ্ত পর।
খোঁড়া গাধা ঘোড়ার দর॥

উড। নীলকণ্ঠ কি করিল?

গোপী। নীলকণ্ঠ বাবু আমিনকে অনেক ভর্ৎসনা করেন, আমিন তাহাতে লজ্জিত হইয়া গোলদারের বাড়ী ফিরিয়া গিয়া দুই টাকার সহিত দাদনের টাকাটি ফেরত লইয়া আসিয়াছে। চন্দ্র গোলদার সাতান, ৩/৪ বিঘা নীল অনায়াসে দিতে পারিত, এই কি চাকরের কায? আমি দেওয়ানি আমিনি দুই করিতে পারি তবেই এ সব নিমক্‌হারামি রহিত হয়।

উড। বড় বজ্জাতি, ছাফ্ নেমক্‌হারামি।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার বেয়াদবি মাফ্ হয়—আমিন আপনার ভগিনীকে ছোট সাহেবের কামরায় আনিয়াছিল।

উড। হাঁ হাঁ আমি জানি, ঐ বাঞ্চৎ আর পডী ময়রাণী ছোট সাহেবকে খারাপ করিয়াছে। বজ্জাৎকো হাম জরুর শেখলায়েঙ্গে, বাঞ্চৎকো হামারা বট্‌নেকা ঘরমে ভেজ ডেয়।

উড়ের প্রস্থান।

গোপী। দেখ দেখি বাবা কার হাতে বাঁদোর ভাল খেল। কায়েত ধূর্ত্ত আর কাক ধূর্ত্ত।

ঠেকিয়াছ এইবার কায়েতের ঘায়।
বোনাই বাবার বাবা হার মেনে যায়॥

দ্বিতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

নবীনমাধবের শয়নঘর

নবীনমাধব এবং সৈরিন্ধ্রী আসীন

সৈরিন্ধ্রী। প্রাণনাথ, অলঙ্কার আগে না শ্বশুর আগে—তুমি যে জন্যে দিবা নিশি ভ্রমণ কর্য্যে বেড়াইতেছ, যে জন্যে তুমি আহার নিদ্রা ত্যাগ করিয়াছ, যে জন্যে তোমার চক্ষুঃ হইতে অবিরল জলধারা পড়িতেছে, যে জন্যে তোমার প্রফুল্ল বদন বিষণ্ণ হইয়াছে, যে জন্যে তোমার শিরঃপীড়া জন্মিয়াছে, হে নাথ আমি সেই জন্যে কি অকিঞ্চিৎকর আভরণগুলিন দিতে পারি নে?

নবীন। প্রেয়সি, তুমি অনায়াসে দিতে পার কিন্তু আমি কোন্ মুখে লই। কামিনীকে অলঙ্কারে বিভূষিতা করিতে পতির কত কষ্ট, বেগবতী নদীতে সন্তরণ, ভীষণ সমুদ্রে নিমজ্জন, যুদ্ধে প্রবেশ, পর্ব্বতে আরোহণ, অরণ্যে বাস, ব্যাঘ্রের মুখে গমন,—পতি এত ক্লেশে পত্নীকে ভূষিতা করে, আমি কি এমন মূঢ় সেই পত্নীর ভূষণ হরণ করিব। পঙ্কজনয়নে, অপেক্ষা কর। আজ দেখি যদি নিতান্তই টাকার সুযোগ করিতে না পারি তবে কল্য তোমার অলঙ্কার গ্রহণ করিব।

সৈরিন্ধ্রী। হৃদয়বল্লভ! আমাদের অতি দুঃসময়, এখন কে তোমাকে পাঁচ শত টাকা বিশ্বাস কর্য্যে ধার দেবে? আমি পুনর্ব্বার মিনতি করিতেছি আমার আর ছোট বয়ের গহনা পোদ্দারের বাড়ীতে রেখে টাকার যোগাড় কর, তোমার ক্লেশ দেখে সোনার কমল ছোট বউ আমার মলিন হয়েছে।

নবীন। আহা! বিধুমুখি কি নিদারুণ কথা বলিলে, আমার অন্তঃকরণে যেন অগ্নিবাণ প্রবেশ করিল—ছোট বধূমাতা আমার বালিকা, উত্তম বসন, উত্তম অলঙ্কারেই তাঁর আমোদ, তাঁর জ্ঞান কি, তিনি সংসারের বার্ত্তা কি বুঝেছেন, কৌতুক ছলে বিপিনের গলার হার কেড়ে লইলে বিপিন যেমন ক্রন্দন করে, বধূমাতার অলঙ্কার লইলে তেমন রোদন কর্‌বেন। হা ঈশ্বর! আমাকে এমন কাপুরুষ করিলে! আমি এমন নির্দ্দয় দস্যু হইলাম। আমি বালিকাকে বঞ্চিত করিব? জীবন থাকিতে হইবে না—নরাধম নিষ্ঠুর নীলকরেও এমন কর্ম্ম করিতে পারে না—প্রণয়িনি এমন কথা আর মুখে আনিও না।

সৈরি। জীবনকান্ত আমি যে কষ্টে ও নিদারুণ কথা বলিয়াছি তাহা আমিই জানি আর সর্ব্বান্তর্যামী পরমেশ্বরই জানেন, ও অগ্নিবাণ তার সন্দেহ কি—আমার অন্তঃকরণ বিদীর্ণ করেছে, জিহ্বা দগ্ধ করেছে, পরে ওষ্ঠ ভেদ কর্য্যে তোমার

অন্তঃকরণে প্রবেশ করিয়াছে—প্রাণনাথ বড় যন্ত্রণাতেই ছোট বয়ের গহনা লইতে বলিয়াছি—তোমার পাগলের ন্যায় ভ্রমণ, শ্বশুরের ক্রন্দন, শাশুড়ীর দীর্ঘ নিশ্বাস, ছোট বয়ের বিরল বদন, জ্ঞাতি বান্ধবের হেঁটমুখ, রাইয়ত জনের হাহাকার, এ সকল দেখে কি আমোদ আনন্দ মনে আসে? কোনরূপ উদ্ধার হইতে পারিলে সকলের রক্ষা। হে নাথ বিপিনের গহনা দিতেও আমার যে কষ্ট, ছোট বয়ের গহনা দিতেও সেই কষ্ট, কিন্তু ছোট বয়ের গহনা দেওয়ার পূর্ব্বে বিপিনের গহনা দিলে ছোট বয়ের প্রতি আমার নিষ্ঠুরাচরণ করা হয়, ছোট বউ ভাবিতে পারে দিদি বুঝি আমায় পর ভাবিলেন। আমি কি এমন কায করো্যে তার সরল মনে ব্যথা দিতে পারি, এ কি মাতৃতুল্য বড় যায়ের কায?

নবীন। প্রণয়িনি তোমার অন্তঃকরণ অতি বিমল, তোমার মত সরল নারী নারীকুলে দুটি নাই—আহা! আমার এমন সংসার এমন হইল! আমি কি ছিলাম কি হলাম! আমার ৭ শত টাকা মুনাফার গাঁতি, আমার ১৫ গোলা ধান, ১৬ বিঘার বাগান, আমার ২০ খান লাঙ্গল, ৫০ জন মাইন্দার, পূজার সময় কি সমারোহ, লোকে বাড়ী পরিপূর্ণ, ব্রাহ্মণ ভোজন, কাঙ্গালীকে অন্ন বিতরণ, আত্মীয়গণের আহার, বৈষ্ণবের গান, আমোদজনক যাত্রা, আমি কত অর্থ ব্যয় করিয়াছি, পাত্র বিবেচনায় এক শত টাকা দান করিয়াছি আহা! এমন ঐশ্বর্য্যশালী হইয়া এখন আমি স্ত্রী ভাদ্রবধূর অলঙ্কার হরণ করিতে প্রবৃত্ত হইয়াছি, কি বিড়ম্বনা! পরমেশ্বর তুমিই দিয়াছিলে, তুমিই লইয়াছ, আক্ষেপ কি—

সৈরি। প্রাণনাথ, তোমাকে কাতর দেখিলে আমার প্রাণ কাঁদিতে থাকে (সজলনেত্রে) আমার কপালে এত যাতনা ছিল, প্রাণকান্তের এত দুর্গতি দেখিতে হলো—আর বাধা দিও না (তাবিজ খুলন)

নবীন। তোমার চক্ষে জল দেখিলে আমার হৃদয় বিদীর্ণ হয় (চক্ষের জল মোচন করিয়া) চুপ কর, শশিমুখী চুপ কর, (হস্ত ধরিয়া) রাখ আর একদিন দেখি।

সৈরি। প্রাণনাথ, উপায় কি—আমি যা বলিতেছি তাই কর, কপালে থাকে অনেক গহনা হবে (নেপথ্যে হাঁচি) সত্যি সত্যি—আদুরী আস্‌ছে।

দুইখান লিপি লইয়া আদুরীর প্রবেশ

আদুরী। চিঠি দুইখান কন্‌তে আসেচে মুই কতি পারি নে মাঠাকুরুণ তোমার হাতে দিতে বল্লে।

লিপি দিয়া আদুরীর প্রস্থান

নবীন। তোমাদের গহনা লইতে হয় না হয় এই দুই লিপিতে জানিতে পারিব —(প্রথম লিপি খুলন)

সৈরি। চেঁচিয়ে পড়।

নবীন। (লিপি পাঠ)

রোকায় আশীর্ব্বাদ জানিবেন—

আপনাকে টাকা দেওয়া প্রত্যুপকার করা মাত্র, কিন্তু আমার মাতা ঠাকুরাণীর গত কল্য গঙ্গালাভ হইয়াছে তদাদ্যকৃত্যের দিন সংক্ষেপ, এ সংবাদ মহাশয়কে কল্যই লিখিয়াছি—তামাক অদ্যাপি বিক্রয় হয় নাই। ইতি

শ্রীঘনশ্যাম মুখোপাধ্যায়

কি দুর্দ্দৈব! মুখোপাধ্যায় মহাশয়ের মাতৃশ্রাদ্ধে আমার এই কি উপকার! দেখি, তমি কি অস্ত্র ধারণ করিয়া আসিয়াছ। (দ্বিতীয় লিপি খুলন)

সৈরি। প্রাণনাথ, আশা কর্য়ো নিরাশ হওয়া বড় ক্লেশ—ও চিটি ওমনি থাক্—

নবীন। (লিপি পাঠ)

প্রতিপাল্য শ্রীগোকুলকৃষ্ণ পালিতস্য

বিনয় পূর্ব্বক নমস্কারা নিবেদনঞ্চ বিশেষ। মহাশয়ের মঙ্গলে নিজ মঙ্গল পরং লপিপ্রাপ্তে সমাচার অবগত হইলাম। আমি ৩০০ টাকা যোগাড় করিয়াছি, কল্য সমভিব্যাহারে নিকট পৌছিব বক্রী এক শত টাকা আগামি মাসে পরিশোধ করিব। মহাশয় যে উপকার করিয়াছেন, আমি কিঞ্চিৎ সুদ দিতে ইচ্ছা করি ইতি।

সৈরি। পরমেশ্বর বুঝি মুখ তুলে চাইলেন—যাই আমি ছোট বউকে বলিগে।

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রস্থান

নবীন। (স্বগত) প্রাণ আমার সারল্যের পুত্তলিকা; এ ত ভীষণ প্রবাহে তৃণমাত্র—এই অবলম্বন করিয়া পিতাকে ইন্দ্রাবাদে লইয়া যাই পরে অদৃষ্টে যাহা থাকে তাই হবে। দেড় শত টাকা হাতে আছে—তামাক কয়েক খান আর এক মাস রাখিলে ৫০০ টাকা বিক্রয় হইতে পারে, তা কি করি সাড়ে তিন শত টাকাতেই ছাড়িতে হইল, আমলা খরচ অনেক লাগিবে—যাওয়া আসাতে বিস্তর ব্যয়—এমন মিথ্যা মোকদ্দমায় যদি মেয়াদ হয় তবে বুঝিলাম যে এদেশে প্রলয় উপস্থিত। কি নিষ্ঠুর আইন প্রচার হইয়াছে। আইনের দোষ কি, আইনকর্ত্তাদিগের

বা দোষ কি—যাহাদিগের হস্তে আইন অর্পিত হইয়াছে তাহারা যদি নিরপেক্ষ হয় তবে কি দেশের সর্ব্বনাশ ঘটে। আহা! এই আইনে কত ব্যক্তি বিনাপরাধে কারাগারে ক্রন্দন করিতেছে—তাহাদের স্ত্রী পুত্রের দুঃখ দেখিলে বক্ষঃ বিদীর্ণ হয় —উনানের হাঁড়ি উনানেই রহিয়াছে, উঠানের ধান উঠানেই শুকাইতেছে, গোয়ালের গোরু গোয়ালেই রহিয়াছে—ক্ষেত্রের চাস সম্পূর্ণ হল না, সকল ক্ষেত্রে বীজ বপন হল না, ধানের ক্ষেত্রের ঘাস নির্ম্মূল হল না, বৎসরের উপায় কি—কোথা নাথ, কোথা তাত শব্দে ধূলায় পতিত হইয়া রোদন করিতেছে। কোন২ মাজিষ্ট্রেট সুবিচার করিতেছেন, তাঁহাদের হস্তে এ আইন যমদণ্ড হয় নাই। আহা! যদি সকলে অমরনগরের মাজিষ্ট্রেটের ন্যায় ন্যায়বান হইতেন তবে কি রাইয়তের পাকা ধানে মই পড়ে, শস্যপূর্ণ ক্ষেত্রে শলভপতন হয়? তা হলে কি আমায় এই দুস্তর বিপদে পতিত হইতে হয়। হে লেফ্‌টেনাণ্ট গভরনর! যেমন আইন করিয়াছিলে, তেমনি সজ্জন নিযুক্ত করিতে তবে এমন অমঙ্গল ঘটিত না, হে দেশপালক! যদি এমত একটি ধারা করিতে যে মিথ্যা মোকদ্দমা প্রমাণ হইলে ফরিয়াদির মেয়াদ হইবে, তাহা হইলে অমরনগরের জেল নীলকরে পূর্ণ হইত, এবং তাহারা এমত প্রবল হইতে পারিত না—আমাদিগের মাজিষ্ট্রেট বদলি হইয়াছে, কিন্তু এ মোকদ্দমা শেষ পর্য্যন্ত থাকিবে, তাহা হইলেই আমাদিগের শেষ।

সাবিত্রীর প্রবেশ

সাবি। নবীন সব লাঙ্গল যদি ছেড়ে দাও তা হলেও কি দাদন নিতে হবে? লাঙ্গল গোরু সব বিক্রী করো্যে ব্যবসা কর্ব্ব, তাতে যে আয় হবে সুখে ভোগ করা যাবে, এ যাতনা আর সহ্য হয় না।

নবীন। মা আমারো সেই ইচ্চা। কেবল, বিন্দুর কর্ম্ম হওয়া অপেক্ষা করতেছি। আপাততঃ চাস ছাড়িয়া দিলে সংসার নির্ব্বাহ হওয়া দুষ্কর, এই জন্য এত ক্লেশেও লাঙ্গল কয়েকখান রাখিয়াছি।

সাবি। এই শিরঃপীড়া লয়ে কেমন করে যাবে বল দেখি, হা পরমেশ্বর! এমন নীল এখানে হয়েছিল। (নবীনের মস্তকে হস্তামর্ষণ)

রেবতীর প্রবেশ

রেবতী। মাঠাকুরুণ, মুই কনে যাব, কি করবো, কল্লে কি, ক্যান মত্তি এনেলাম। পরের জাত ঘরে আনে সামাল দিতি পাল্লাম না। বড়বাবু মোরে বাঁচাও,

মোর পরাণ ফাটে বার হলো— মোর ক্ষেত্রমণিরি অ্যানে দাও, মোর সোনার পুতুল অ্যানে দাও।

সাবি। কি হয়েচে, হয়েচে কি?

রেবতী। ক্ষেত্র মোর বিকেল বেলা পেঁচোর মার সঙ্গে দাসদিগিতে জল আন্তি গিয়েলো। বাগান দিয়ে আসবার সমে চার জন নেটেলাতে বাছারে ধর্য়ো নিয়ে গিয়েছে। পদী সর্ব্বনাশী দেখয়্যে দিয়ে পেলয়েচে। বড়বাবু পরের জাত, কি কল্লাম, কেন এনেলাম, বড় সাধে সাদ দেবে ভেবেলাম।

সাবি। কি সর্ব্বনাশ! সর্ব্বনেশেরা সব কত্তে পারে—লোকের জমি কেড়ে নিচ্চিস্, ধান কেড়ে নিচ্চিস্, গোরু বাচুর কেড়ে নিচ্চিস্, লাটির আগায় নীল বুনয়ে নিচ্চিস্—তা লোক কেঁদিই হোক, কোকিয়েই হোক্ কচ্চে—একি! ভালমানুষের জাত খাওয়া?

রেবতী। মা, আদপেটা খেয়ে নীল কত্তি নেগিচি, যে ক কুড়োয় দাগ মার্‌লি তাই বোন্‌লাম—রেয়ে ছোড়া জমি চসে আর ফুলে২ কেঁদে ওঠে—মাটেতে অ্যাসে এ কথা শুনে পাগল হয়ে যাবে অ্যানে।

নবীন। সাধু কোথায়?

রেবতী। বাইরি বসে কান্তি নেগেচে।

নবীন। সতীত্ব, কুলমহিলার অয়স্কান্ত মণি, সতীত্বভূষণে বিভূষিতা রমণী কি রমণীয়া; পিতার স্বরপুর বৃকোদর জীবিত থাকিতে কুলকামিনী অপহরণ! এই মুহূর্ত্তেই যাইব— কেমন দুঃশাসন দেখিব, সতীত্ব শ্বেত উৎপলে নীলমণ্ডূক কখনই বসিতে পারিবে না।

নবীনের প্রস্থান

সাবি। সতীত্ব সোনার নিধি বিধিদত্ত ধন।
কাঙালিনী পেলে রাণী এমন রতন।

যদি নীল বানরের হস্ত হইতে পবিত্র মাণিক্য অপবিত্র না হইতে হইতে আনিতে পার, তবেই তোমাকে সার্থক গর্ভে স্থান দিয়াছিলাম। এমন অত্যাতার বাপের কালেও শুনি নাই—চল ঘোষ বউ বাহিরের দিকে যাই।

উভয়ের প্রস্থান

তৃতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

রোগসাহেবের কাম্‌রা

রোগ আসীন। পদী ময়রাণী এবং ক্ষেত্রমণির প্রবেশ

ক্ষেত্র। ময়রাপিসি, মোরে এমন কথা বল না, মুই পরাণ দিতি পারবো, ধর্ম্ম দিতি পারবো না, মোরে কেটে কুচি২ কর, মোরে পুড়য়ে ফেল, ভেসয়ে দাও, পুঁতে রাখ, মুই পরপুরুষ ছুঁতি পারবো না, মোর ভাতার মনে কি ভাব্‌বে?

পদী। তোর ভাতার কোথায় তুই কোথায়; এ কথা কেউ জান্তে পার্‌বে না-—এই রাত্রেই আমি সঙ্গে করে তোর মায়ের কাছে দিয়ে আসবো।

ক্ষেত্র। ভাতারই যেন জানতি পার্‌লে না—ওপরের দেব্‌তা তো জান্তি পার্‌বে, দেবতার চকি তো ধূলো দিতি পারবো না! আমার প্রাণের ভিতর তো পাঁজার আগুন জ্বলবে, মোর স্বামী সতী বল্যে মোরে যত ভাল বাস্‌বে তত মোর মন তো পুড়তি থাকবে, জানাই হোক, আর অজানাই হোক, মুই উপপতি কত্তি কখনই পারবো না।

রোগ। পদ্দ, খাটের উপরে আন্‌ না।

পদী। আয় বাচা তুই সাহেবের কাছে আয়. তোর যা বল্‌তে হয় ওকে বল. আমার কাছে বলা অরণ্যে রোদন।

রোগ। আমার কাছে বলা শূয়ারের পায়ে মুক্ত ছড়ানো, হা হা হা আমরা নীলকর. আমরা যমের দোসর হইয়াছি, দাঁড়ায়ে থেকে কত গ্রাম জ্বালাইয়া দিয়াছি, পুত্রকে স্তন ভক্ষণ করাইতে২ কত মাতা পুড়ে মরিল. তা দেখে কি আমরা স্নেহ করি, স্নেহ করিলে কি আমাদের কুটি থাকে। আমরা স্বভাবতঃ মন্দ নই, নীলকর্ম্মে আমাদের মন্দ মেজাজ বৃদ্ধি হইয়াছে। একজন মানুষকে মারিতে মনে দুঃখ হইত, এখন দশ জন মেয়ে মানুষকে নিদ্দম করিয়া রামকান্ত পেটা করিতে পারি. তখনি হাঁসিতে২ খানা খাই—আমি মেয়ে মানুষকে অধিক ভাল বাসি, কুটির কর্ম্মে ওকর্ম্মের বড় সুবিধা হইতে পারে; সমুদ্রে সব মিশ্‌য়ে যাইতেছে। তোর গায় জোর নাই—পদ্দ, টানিয়া আন।

পদী। ক্ষেত্রমণি. লক্ষ্মী মা আমার, বিছানায় এস, সাহেব তোরে একটা বিবির পোষাক দেবে বলেচে।

ক্ষেত্র। পোড়া কপাল বিবির পোষাকের—চট পর্‌য়্যে থাকি সেও ভাল তবু

য্যান বিবির পোষাক পর্‌তি না হয়। ময়রা পিসি মোর বড় তেষ্টা পেয়েচে, মোরে বাড়ী দিয়ে আয়, মুই জল খেয়ে শেতল হই—আহা, আহা! মোর মা এত বেল্ গলায় দড়ি দিয়েচে, মোর বাপ মাথায় কুড়ুল মেরেচে, মোর কাকা বুনো মষির মতো ছুটে ব্যাড়াচ্চে। মোর মার আর নেই, বাবা বাকা দু জনের মধ্যি মুই অ্যাক সন্তান। মোরে ছেড়ে দে, মোরে বাড়ী রেখে আয়, তোর পায় পড়ি, পদি পিসি তোর গু খাই—মা রে মলাম জল তেষ্টায় মলাম।

রোগ। কুঁজোয় জল আছে খাইতে দেও।

ক্ষেত্র। মুই কি হিঁদুর মেয়ে হয়ে সাহেবের জল খাতি পারি—মোরে নেটেলায় ছুঁয়েচে, মুই বাড়ী গিয়ে না নেয়ে তো ঘরে যাতি পারবো না।

পদী। (স্বগত) আমার ধর্ম্মও গেচে, জাতও গেচে, (প্রকাশে) তা, মা, আমি কি কর্‌বো, সাহেবের খপ্পরে পড়িলে ছাড়ান ভার—ছোট সাহেব, ক্ষেত্রমণি আজ বাড়ী যাক্ তখন আর এক দিন আস্‌বে।

রোগ। তুমি তবে আমার সঙ্গে থেকে মজা কর। তুই ঘর হইতে যা, আমার শক্তি থাকে আমি নরম কর্‌বো, নচেৎ তোর সঙ্গে বাড়ী পাঠাইয়ে দিব—ড্যাম্‌নেড হোর, আমার বোধ হইতেছে তুই বাধা করেছিলি, আসিতে দিস্ নি, তাই তো ভদ্রলোকের মেয়েকে লাটিয়াল দিয়ে আনা হইল, আমি সহজে নীলের লাটিয়াল এ কার্য্যে কখন দিয়াছি? হারামজাদী পদী ময়রাণী।

পদী। তোমার কলিকে ডাকো সেই তোমার বড় প্রিয় হয়েছে, আমি তা বুঝিয়াছি।

ক্ষেত্র। ময়রা পিসি যাস্ নে, ময়রা পিসি যাস্ নে।

পদী ময়রাণীর প্রস্থান

মোরে কাল সাপের গর্ত্তের মধ্যি একা রেকে গেলি, মোর যে ভয় করে, মুই যে কাঁপ্‌তি লেগিচি, মোর যে ভয়তে গা ঘুরতি লেগেচে, মোর মুখ যে তেষ্টায় ধূলো বেটে গেল।

রোগ। ডিয়ার, ডিয়ার, (দুই হস্তে ক্ষেত্রমণির দুই হস্ত ধরিয়া টানন) আইস, আইস—

ক্ষেত্র। ও সাহেব, তুমি মোর বাবা, ও সাহেব তুমি মোর বাবা, মোরে ছেড়ে দেও, পদী পিসির সঙ্গে দিয়ে মোরে বাড়ী পেট্‌য়ে দাও, আঁদার রাত, মুই একা যাতি পারবো না—(হস্ত ধরিয়া টানন) ও সাহেব তুমি মোর বাবা, ও সাহেব তুমি মোর বাবা, হাত ধল্লি জাত যায়, ছেড়ে দাও—তুমি মোর বাবা।

রোগ। তোর ছেলিয়ার বাবা হইতে ইচ্ছা হইয়াছে, আমি কোন কথায় ভুলিতে পারি না, বিছানায় আইস, নচেৎ পদাঘাতে পেট ভাঙ্গিয়া দিব।

ক্ষেত্র। মোর ছেলে মরে যাবে, দই সাহেব, মোর ছেলে মরে যাবে—মুই পোয়াতি।

রোগ। তোমাকে উল্লঙ্গ না করিলে তোমার নজ্জা যাইবে না।

বস্ত্র ধরিয়া টানন

ক্ষেত্র। ও সাহেব মুই তোমার মা, মোরে ন্যাংটো করো না, তুমি মোর ছেলে, মোর কাপড় ছেড়ে দাও—

রোগের হস্তে নখ বিদারণ

রোগ। ইন্‌ফরন্যাল বিচ্! (বেত্র গ্রহণ করিয়া) এই বার তোমার ছেনালি ভঙ্গ হইবে।

ক্ষেত্র। মোরে অ্যাকবারে মেরে ফ্যাল, মুই কিছু বলবো না। মোর বুকি অ্যাকটা তেরোনালের খোঁচা মার্ মুই স্বগ্‌গে চলে যাই—ও গুখেগোর বেটা, আটকুড়ির ছেলে, তোর বাড়ী যোড়া মরা মর্য়ে, মোর গায়ে যদি আবার হাত দিবি তোর হাত মুই এঁচড়ে কেম্‌ড়ে টুক্‌রো২ করবো, তোর মা, বুন নেই, তাদের গিয়ে কাপড় কেড়ে নিগে না, দেঁড়য়ে রলি কেন, ও ভাইভাতারীর ভাই, মার্ না মোর প্রাণ বার কর্য়ে ফ্যাল না, আর যে মুই সইতি পারি নে।

রোগ। চুপরাও, হারামজাদী, ক্ষুদ্র মুখে বড় কথা।

পেটে ঘুসি মারিয়া চুল ধরিয়া টানন

ক্ষেত্র। কোথায় বাবা, কোথায় মা, দেখ গো, তোমাদের ক্ষেত্র মলো গো (কম্পন)।

জানেলার খড়খড়ি ভাঙ্গিয়া নবীনমাধব ও তোরাপের প্রবেশ

নবীন। (রোগের হস্ত হইতে ক্ষেত্রমণির কেশ ছাড়াইয়া লইয়া) রে নরাধম নীচবৃত্তি নীলকর, এই কি তোমার খ্রীষ্টানধর্ম্মের জিতেন্দ্রিয়তা? এই কি তোমার খ্রীষ্টানের দয়া, বিনয়, শীলতা? আহা, আহা, বালিকা, অবলা, অন্তর্ব্বত্নী কামিনীর প্রতি এইরূপ নির্দ্দয় ব্যবহার!

তোরাপ। সমিন্দি দেঁড়ুয়ে যেন কাটের পুতুল— গোড়ার বাক্যি হরে গিয়েচে —বড়বাবু, সমিন্দির কি এমান আছে তা ধরম কথা শোনাবে, ও ঝ্যামন কুকুর

মুই তেম্‌নি মুগুর, সমিন্দির ঝ্যামন চাবালি, মোর তেম্‌নি হাতের পোঁচা (গলদেশ ধরিয়া গালে চপেটাঘাত) ডাক্‌বি তো জোরার বাড়ী যাবি (গাল টিপে ধর্য়ে) পাঁচ দিন চোরের এক দিন সেদের, পাঁচ দিন খাবালি এক দিন খা (কানমলন)।

নবীন। ভয় কি ভাল কর্য়ে কাপড় পর। (ক্ষেত্রমণিব বস্ত্র পরিধান) তোরাপ, তুই বেটার গাল টিপে রাখিস, আমি ক্ষেত্রকে পাঁজা কর্য়ে লইয়া পালাই—আমি বুনোপাড়া ছাড়ুয়ে গেলে তবে ছেড়ে দিয়ে তুই দৌড় দিবি। নদীর ধার দিয়ে যাওয়া বড় কষ্ট, আমার শরীর কাঁটায় ছড়্যে গিয়েছে, এতক্ষণ বোধ করি বুনোরা ঘুম্‌য়েছে, বিশেষতঃ এ কথা শুনিলে কিছু বল্‌বে না, তুই তার পর আমাদের বাড়ী যাস্‌, তুই কিরূপে ইন্দ্রাবাদ হইতে পালাইলে এলি এবং এখন কোথায় বাস করিতেছিস্‌ তাহা আমি শুন্‌তে চাই।

তোরাপ। মুই এই নাতি নদীডে সেঁৎরে পার হয়্যে ঘরে যাব—মোর নছিবির কথা আর কি শোন্‌বা—মুই মোক্তার সমন্দির আস্তাবলের ঝরকা ভেঙ্গে পেল্‌য়ে একেবারে বসন্তবাবুর জমিদারীতে পেল্‌য়ে গ্যালাম, তার পর নাত কর্য়ে জরু ছাবাল ঘর পোরলাম। এই সমন্দিই তো ওটালে, নাঙ্গল কর্য়ে কি আর খাবার যো নেকেচে, নীলের ঠ্যালাটি কেমন—তাতে আবার নেমোখারামি কত্তি বলে—কই শালা, গ্যাড ম্যাড কর্য়ে জুতার গুঁতা মারিস্‌ নে?

হাঁটুর গুঁতা

নবীন। তোরাপ, মারবার আবশ্যক কি, ওরা নির্দ্দয় বল্যে আমাদের নির্দ্দয় হওয়া উচিত নয়; আমি চলিলাম।

ক্ষেত্রকে লইয়া নবীনমাধবের প্রস্থান

তোরাপ। এমন বস্‌গারও বেছাম্পর কত্তি চাস—তোর বড় বাবারে বল্যে মেন্‌য়ে জুন্‌য়ে কায মেরে নে, জোর জোরাবতী কদিন চলে, পেল্‌য়ে গেলি তো কিছু কত্তি পার্‌বা না, মরার বাড়া তো গাল নেই। ও সমিন্দি নেয়েত ফেরার হলি ঝে কুটি কবরের মধ্যি ঢোক্‌বে। বড়বাবুর আর বচুরে ট্যাকাগুনো চুক্‌য়ে দে আর এ বচোর ঝা বুনতি চাচ্চে তাই নিগে, তোদের জন্যিই ওরা বেপালটে পড়েচে, দাদন গাদ্‌লিই তো হয় না, চসা চাই— ছোট সাহেব, স্যালাম, মুই আসি।

চীৎ করিয়া ফেলিয়া পলায়ন

রোগ। বাই জোভ! বিটেন্‌ টু জেলি।

প্রস্থান

চতুর্থ গর্ভাঙ্ক

গোলোক বসুর ভবনের দরদালান

সাবিত্রীর প্রবেশ

সাবিত্রী। (দীর্ঘ নিশ্বাস পরিত্যাগপূর্ব্বক) রে নিদারুণ হাকিম, তুই আমাকেও কেন তলব দিলি নে—আমি পতি পুত্রের সঙ্গে জেলায় যেতাম; এ শ্মশানে বাস অপেক্ষা আমার সে যে ছিল ভাল। হা! কর্ত্তা আমার ঘরবাসী মানুষ—কখন গাঁ অন্তরে নিমন্ত্রণ খেতে যান না, তাঁর কপালে এত দুঃখ, ফৌজদুরিতে ধর্‍্যে নে গেল, তাঁর জেলে যেতে হবে; ভগবতি! তোমার মনে এই ছিল মা? আহা হা! তিনি যে বলেন আমার এড়ো ঘরে না শুলে ঘুম হয় না, তিনি যে আতপ চালের ভাত খান, তিনি যে বড় বউমার হাতে নইলে খান না, আহা! বুক চাপ্‌ড়েং রক্ত বার করেছেন, কেঁদেং চক্ষু ফুলয়েছেন, যাবার সময়ে বলেন গিন্নি এই যাত্রা আমার গঙ্গাযাত্রা হলো—(ক্রন্দন) নবীন বলেন, মা তোমার ভগবতীকে ডাক আমি অবশ্য জয়ী হয়ে ওঁরে নিয়ে বাড়ী আস্‌বো—বাবার আমার কাঞ্চনমুখ কালি হয়ে গিয়েছে; টাকার যোগাড় করিতেই বা কত কষ্ট, ঘুরেং ঘূর্ণি হয়েছে, পাছে আমি বউদের গহনা দিই, তাই আমারে সাহস দেন, মা টাকার কমি কি, মোকদ্দমায় কতই খরচ হবে। গাঁতির মোকদ্দমায় আমার গহনা বন্দক পড়লে বাবার কতই খেদ—বলেন কিছু টাকা হাতে এলিই মার গহনাগুলিন আগে খালাস কর্‍্যে আন্‌বো—বাবার আমার মুখে সাহস, চক্ষে জল—বাবা আমার কাঁদিতেং যাত্রা করলেন—আমার নবীন এই রোদে ইন্দ্রাবাদ গেল আমি ঘরে বসে রলাম—মহাপাপিনি! এই কি তোর মার প্রাণ!

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রবেশ

সৈরি। ঠাকুরুণ, অনেক বেলা হয়েচে, স্নান কর। আমাদের অভাগা কপাল, তা নইলে এমন ঘটনা হবে কেন।

সাবি। (ক্রন্দন করিতেং) না মা, আমার নবীন বাড়ী না ফিরে এলে আমি আর এ দেহে অন্ন জল দেব না, বাছারে আমার খাওয়াবে কে?

সৈরি। সেখানে ঠাকুরপোর বাসা আছে, বামন আছে, কষ্ট হবে না। তুমি এস স্নান করসে।

তৈলপাত্র লইয়া সরলতার প্রবেশ

ছোট বউ, তুমি ঠাকুরুণকে তৈল মাখায়ে স্নান করায়ে রান্নাঘরে নিয়ে এস, আমি খাওয়ার জায়গা করি গে।

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রস্থান, সরলতার তৈলমর্দ্দন

সাবিত্রী। তোতোপাখী আমার নীরব হয়েছে, মার মুখে আর কথা নাই, মা আমার বাসি ফুলের মত মলিন হয়েছেন। আহা আহা! বিন্দুমাধবকে কত দিন দেখি নাই, বাবার কালেজ বন্ধ হবে বাড়ী আস্‌বেন আশা কর্য়ে রইচি তাতে এই দায় উপস্থিত। (সরলতার চিবুকে হস্ত দিয়া) বাছার মুখ শুকাইয়া গিয়াছে, এখন বুঝি কিছু খাউ নি। ঘোর বিপদে পড়ে রইচি তা বাছাদের খাওয়া হলো কি না দেখিব কখন? আমি আপনি স্নান করিতেছি, তুমি কিছু খাও গে মা, চল আমিও যাই।

উভয়ের প্রস্থান

চতুর্থ অঙ্ক

প্রথম গর্ভাঙ্ক

ইন্দ্রাবাদের ফৌজদারি কাছারি

উড, রোগ, মাজিষ্ট্রেট, আমলা আসীন। গোলোকচন্দ্র, নবীনমাধব, বিন্দুমাধব, বাদীপ্রতিবাদীর মোক্তার, নাজির, চাপরাসি, আরদালি, রাইয়ত প্রভৃতি দণ্ডায়মান।

প্র মোক্তার। অধীনের এই দরখাস্তের প্রার্থনা মঞ্জুর হয়। (সেরেস্তাদারের হস্তে দরখাস্ত দান)

মাজি। আচ্ছা পাঠ কর। (উড সাহেবের সহিত পরামর্শ এবং হাস্য)

সেরেস্তা। (প্র মোক্তারের প্রতি) রামায়ণের পুঁথি লিখেছ যে, দরখাস্ত চুম্বক না হইলে কি সকল পড়া গিয়া থাকে (দরখাস্তের পাত উল্‌টায়ন)

মাজি। (উড সাহেবের সহিত কথোপকথনান্তর হাস্য সম্বরণ করিয়া) খোলোসা পড়।

সেরেস্তা। আসামীর এবং আসামীর মোক্তারের অনুপস্থিতিতে ফরিয়াদীর সাক্ষিগণের সাক্ষ্য লওয়া হইয়াছে—প্রার্থনা, ফরিয়াদীর সাক্ষিগণকে পুনর্ব্বার হাজির আনা হয়।

বা মোক্তার। ধর্ম্মাবতার, মোক্তারগণ মিথ্যা, শঠতা, প্রবঞ্চনায় রত বটে, অনায়াসে হলোপ লইয়া মিথ্যা বলে, মোক্তারেরা অবিরত অপকৃষ্ট কার্য্যে রত, বিবাহিতা কামিনীকে বিসর্জ্জন দিয়া তাহারা তাহাদের অমরালয় বারমহিলালয়ে কাল যাপন করে, জমিদারেরা ফলতঃ মোক্তারগণকে বিশেষ ঘৃণা করে তবে স্বকার্য্য সাধন হেতু তাহারদিগের ডাকে এবং বিছানায় বসিতে দেয়, ধর্ম্মাবতার মোক্তারগণের বৃত্তিই প্রতারণা। কিন্তু নীলকরের মোক্তারদিগের দ্বারা কোনরূপে কোন প্রতারণা হইতে পারে না। নীলকল সাহেবেরা খ্রীষ্টিয়ান—খ্রীষ্টিয়ান ধর্ম্মে মিথ্যা অতি উৎকট পাপ বলিয়া গণ্য হইয়াছে, পরদ্রব্য অপহরণ, পরনারীগমন, নরহত্যা প্রভৃতি জঘন্য কার্য্য খ্রীষ্টিয়ান ধর্ম্মে অতিশয় ঘৃণিত, খ্রীষ্টিয়ান ধর্ম্মে অসৎ কর্ম্ম নিষ্পন্ন করা দূরে থাক্ মনের ভিতরে অসৎ অভিসন্ধিকে স্থান দিলেই নরকানলে দগ্ধ হইতে হয়। করুণা, মার্জ্জনা, বিনয়, পরোপকার খ্রীষ্টিয়ান ধর্ম্মের

প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য, এমন সত্য সনাতন ধর্ম্মপরায়ণ নীলকরগণ কর্ত্তৃক মিথ্যা সাক্ষ্য দেওয়া কখনই সম্ভবে না। ধর্ম্মাবতার আমরা এই নীলকরের বেতনভোগী মোক্তার, আমরা তাঁহারদিগের চরিত্র অনুসারে চরিত্র সংশোধন করিয়াছি, আমারদিগের ইচ্ছা হইলেও সাক্ষীকে তামিল দিতে সাহস হয় না, যেহেতু সত্যপরায়ণ সাহেবেরা সূচাগ্রে চাকরের চাতুরী জানিতে পারিলে তাহার যথোচিত শাস্তি করেন—প্রতিবাদীর মানিত সাক্ষী কুটির আমিন মজুকুর তাহার এক দৃষ্টান্তের স্থল, রাইয়তের দাদনের টাকা রাইয়তকে বঞ্চিত করিয়াছিল বলিয়া দয়াশীল সাহেব উহাকে কর্ম্মচ্যুত করিয়াছেন এবং গোরিব ছাঁপোষা রাইয়তের ক্রন্দনে রোষপরবশ হইয়া প্রহারও করিয়াছেন।

উড। (মাজিষ্ট্রেটের প্রতি) এক্সট্রিম প্রোভোকেশান্, এক্সট্রিম প্রোভোকেশান্।

বা মোক্তার। হুজুর, হুজুর হইতে আমার সাক্ষিগণের প্রতি অনেক সোয়াল হইয়াছিল, যদ্যপি তাহারা তালিমি সাক্ষী হইত তবে সেই সোয়ালেই পড়িত, আইনকারকেরা বলিয়াছেন "বিচারকর্ত্তা আসামীর আড্‌ভোকেট্ স্বরূপ", সুতরাং আসামীর পক্ষে যে সকল সোয়াল তাহা হুজুর হইতেই হইয়াছে, এতএব সাক্ষিগণকে পুনর্ব্বার আনয়ন করিলে আসামীর কিছুমাত্র উপকার দর্শাইবার সম্ভাবনা নাই, কিন্তু সাক্ষিগণের সমূহ ক্লেশ হইতে পারে। ধর্ম্মাবতার, সাক্ষিগণ চাসউপজীবী দীন প্রজা তাহারা স্বহস্তে লাঙ্গল ধরিয়া স্ত্রীপুত্রের প্রতিপালন করে, তাহারদিগের সমস্ত দিবস ক্ষেত্রে না থাকিলে তাহারদিগের আবাদ ধ্বংস হইয়া যায়, বাড়ীতে ভাত খাইতে আইলে চাসের হানি হয় বলিয়া তাহারদের মেয়েরা গামছা বান্ধিয়া অন্নব্যঞ্জন ক্ষেত্রে লইয়া গিয়া তাহারদের খাওয়াইয়া আইসে; চাসারদিগের এক দিন ক্ষেত্র ছাড়িয়া আইলে সর্ব্বনাশ উপস্থিত হয়, এ সময়ে এত দূরস্থ জেলায় রাইয়তদিগের তলব দিয়া আনিলে তাহারদিগের বৎসরের পরিশ্রম বিফল হয়, ধর্ম্মাবতার, ধর্ম্মাবতার, যেমন বিচার করেন।

মাজি। কিছু হেতুবাদ দেখা যায় না। (উড়ের সহিত পরামর্শ) আবশ্যক হইতেছে না।

প্র মোক্তার। হুজুর, নীলকরের দাদন কোন গ্রামের কোন রাইয়তে স্বেচ্ছাধীন গ্রহণ করে না, আমিন খালাসীর সমভিব্যাহারে নীলকর সাহেব, অথবা তাঁহার দেওয়ান, ঘোড়া চড়িয়া ময়দানে গমনপূর্ব্বক উত্তম২ জমিতে কুটির মার্ক দিয়া রাইয়তদিগকে নীল করিতে হুকুম দিয়া আইসেন, পরে জমিয়াতের মালিকান রাইয়তদিগের কুটিতে ধরিয়া আনিয়া বেওরাওয়ারি করিয়া দাদন লিখিয়া লয়েন,

দাদন লইয়া রাইয়তেরা কাঁদিতে২ বাড়ী যায়, যে দিবস যে রাইয়ত দাদন লইয়া আইসে সে দিবস সে রাইয়তের বাড়ীতে মরাকান্না পড়ে। নীলের দ্বারা দাদন পরিশোধ করিয়া ফাজিল পাওনা হইলেও রাইয়তদের নামে দাদনের বকেয়া বাকি বলিয়া খাতায় লেখা থাকে। একবার দাদন লইলে রাইয়তেরা সাত পুরুষ ক্লেশ পায়। রাইয়তেরা নীল করিতে যে কাতর হয়, তাহা তাহারাই জানে আর দীনরক্ষক পরমেশ্বর জানেন। রাইয়তেরা পাঁচ জন একত্রে বসিলেই পরস্পর নিজ২ দাদনের পরিচয় দেয় এবং ত্রাণের উপায় প্রস্তাব করে, তাহারদিগের সলা-পরামর্শের আবশ্যক করে না, আপনারাই মাথায় ঘায়ে কুক্কুর পাগল, এমন, রাইয়তে সাক্ষী দিয়া গেল যে তাহারদিগের নীল করিতে ইচ্ছা ছিল কেবল আমার মক্কেল তাহারদিগের পরামর্শ দিয়া এবং ভয় দেখাইয়া তাহারদের নীলের চাস রহিত করিয়াছে এ অতি আশ্চর্য্য এবং প্রত্যক্ষ প্রতারণা। ধর্ম্মাবতার তাহারদিগের পুনর্ব্বার হুজুরে আনান হয়, অধীন দুই সোয়ালে তাহারদিগের মিথ্যা সাক্ষ্য প্রমাণ করিয়া দিবে। আমার মক্কেলের পুত্র নবীনমাধব বসু, করাল নীলকল নিশাচরের কর হইতে উপায়হীন চাসাদিগকে রক্ষা করিতে প্রাণপণে যত্ন করিয়া থাকেন, এ কথা স্বীকার করি, এবং তিনি উড সাহেবের দৌরাত্ম্য নিবারণ করিতে অনেক বার সফলও হইয়াছেন তাহা পলাশপুর জ্বালান মোকদ্দমার নথিতে প্রকাশ আছে। কিন্তু আমার মক্কেল গোলোকচন্দ্র বসু অতি নিরীহ মনুষ্য, নীলকল সাহেবদের ব্যাঘ্র অপেক্ষা ভয় করে, কোন গোলের মধ্যে থাকে না, কখনও কাহারো মন্দ করে না, কাহাকে মন্দ হইতে উদ্ধার করিতে সাহসীও হয় না; ধর্ম্মাবতার, গোলোকচন্দ্র বসু যে সুচরিত্রের লোক তাহা জেলার সকল লোকে জানে, আমলাদিগের জিজ্ঞাসা হইলে প্রকাশ হইতে পারে—

গোলোক। বিচারপতি, আমার গত বৎসরের নীলের টাকা চুক্‌য়ে দিলেন না, তবু আমি ফৌজদারির ভয়েতে ৬০ বিঘা নীলের দাদন লইতে চাহিয়াছিলাম। বড়বাবু বলিলেন "পিতা, আমারদিগের অন্য আয় আছে, এক বৎসর কিম্বা দুই বৎসরের নীলের লোকসানে কেবল ক্রিয়াকলাপি বন্দ হবে, একেবারে অন্নাভাব হবে না, কিন্তু যাহারদের লাঙ্গলের উপর সম্পূর্ণ নির্ভর তাহারদের উপায় কি? আমরা এই হারে নীল করিলে সকলেরি তাই করিতে হইবে।" বড়বাবু এ কথা বিজ্ঞের মত বলিলেন, আমি কাযে কাযেই বলিলাম তবে সাহেবের হাতে পায় ধরে ৫০ বিঘায় রাজি করগে। সাহেব হাঁ, না কিছুই বলেন না, গোপনে২ আমাকে এই বৃদ্ধ দশায় জেলে দেবার যোগাড় করিলেন। আমি, জানি, সাহেবদিগের রাজি

রাখিতে পারিলেই মঙ্গল। সাহেবদের দেশ, হাকিম ভাই-ব্রাদার, সাহেবদের অমতে চলিতে আছে? আমাকে খালাস দেন, আমি প্রতিজ্ঞা করিতেছি যদিও হাল গোরু অভাবে নীল করিতে না পারি, বৎসর২ সাহেবকে এক শত টাকা নীলের বদলে দিব। আমি কি রায়তদের শেখাইবার মানুষ? আমার সঙ্গে কি তাহাদের দেখা হয়?

প্র মোক্তার। ধর্ম্মাবতার যে ৪ জন রাইয়ত সাক্ষ্য দিয়াছে তাহার একজন টিকিরি, তার কোন পুরুষে লাঙ্গল নাই, তার জমি নাই, জমা নাই, গোরু নাই, গোয়ালঘর নাই, সারেজমিনে তদারক হইলে প্রকাশ হইবে। কানাই তরফদার, ভিন্ন গ্রামের রাইয়ত, তাহার সহিত আমার মক্কেলের কখন দেখা নাই, সে ব্যক্তি সেনাক্ত করিতে অশক্ত। এইং কারণে আমি তাহারদেব পুনর্ব্বার কোর্টে আননের প্রার্থনা করি—ব্যবস্থাকর্ত্তারা লিখিয়াছেন, নিষ্পত্তির অগ্রে আসামীকে সকল প্রকার উপায়ের পন্থা দেওয়া কর্ত্তব্য, ধর্ম্মাবতার আমার এই প্রার্থনা মঞ্জুর করিলে আমার মনে আক্ষেপ থাকে না।

বা মোক্তার। হুজুর—

মাজি। (লিপি লিখন) বল, বল, আমি কর্ণ দিয়া লিখিতেছি না।

বা মোক্তার। হুজুর, এ সময় রাইয়তগণকে কষ্ট দিয়া জেলায় আনিলে তাহাদের প্রচুর ক্ষতি হয়, নচেৎ আমিও প্রার্থনা করি সাক্ষীদিগকে আনান হয়, যেহেতু সোয়ালের কৌশলে আসামীর সাব্যস্ত অপরাধ আরো সাব্যস্ত হইতে পারে। ধর্ম্মাবতার, গোলোক বসের কুচরিত্রের কথা দেশ বিদেশ রাষ্ট আছে, যে উপকার করে তাহারই অপকার করে। অপার সমুদ্র লঙ্ঘন করিয়া নীলকরেরা এ দেশে আসিয়া গুপ্তনিধি বাহির করিয়া দেশের মঙ্গল করিতেছেন, রাজকোষের ধনবৃদ্ধি করিতেছেন এবং আপনারা উপকৃত হইতেছেন। এমত মহাপুরুষদিগের মহৎ কার্য্যে যে ব্যক্তি বিরুদ্ধাচরণ করে তাহার কারাগার ভিন্ন আর স্থান কোথায়?

মাজি। (লিপির শিরোনামা লিখন) চাপরাসি!

চাপ। খোদাবন্দ্।

সাহেবের নিকট গমন

মাজি। (উডের সহিত পরামর্শ) বিবি উড্‌কা পাস দেও—খানসামাকো বোলো বাহারকা সাহেবলোক আজ জাগা নেই।

সেরেস্তা। হুজুর, কি হুকুম লেখা যায়।

মাজি। নথির সামিল থাকে।

সেরেস্তা। (লিখন) হুকুম হইল যে নথির সামিল থাকে। (মাজিষ্ট্রেটের দস্তখৎ) ধর্ম্মাবতার, আসামীর জবারের হুকুমে হুজুরের দস্তখৎ হয় নাই—

মাজি। পাঠ কর।

সেরেস্তা। হুকুম হইল যে আসামীর নিকট হইতে ২০০ শত টাকা তাইনে ২ জন জামিন লওয়া হয় এবং সাফাই সাক্ষীদিগের নামে রীতিমত সফিনা জারী হয়।

মাজিষ্ট্রেটের দস্তখত

মাজি। মিরগাঁর ডাকাতি মোকদ্দমা কাল পেস কর।

মাজিষ্ট্রেট, উড, রোগ, চাপরাসি ও আরদালির প্রস্থান

সেরেস্তা। নাজির মহাশয়, রীতিমত জামানতনামা লেখাপড়া করিয়া নাও।

সেরেস্তাদার, পেস্কার, বাদীর মোক্তার ও রাইয়তগণের প্রস্থান

নাজির। (প্রতিবাদীর মোক্তারের প্রতি) অদ্য সন্ধ্যাকালে জামানতনামা লেখাপড়া কিরূপে হইতে পারে, বিশেষ আমি কিছু ব্যস্ত আছি—

প্র মোক্তার। নামটা খুব বড় বটে, কিন্তু কিছু নাই (নাজিরের সহিত পরামর্শ) গহনা বিক্রী করিয়া এই টাকা দিতে হইবে।

নাজির। আমার তালুকও নাই, ব্যবসায়ও নাই, আবাদও নাই। এই উপজীবিকা। কেবল তোমার খাতিরে এক শত টাকায় রাজি হওয়া, চল আমার বাসায় যাইতে হইবে। দেওয়ানজি ভায়া না শোনেন, ওঁদের পূজা আলাহিদা হয়েছে কি না।

সকলের প্রস্থান

দ্বিতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

ইন্দ্রাবাদ, বিন্দুমাধবের বাসাবাড়ী

নবীনমাধব, বিন্দুমাধব এবং সাধুচরণ আসীন

নবীন। আমার কাযে কাযেই বাড়ী যাইতে হইল। এ সংবাদে জননী শুনিবামাত্র প্রাণত্যাগ করিবেন। বিন্দু, তোমারে আর বলবো কি, দেখ পিতা যেন

কোন মতে ক্লেশ না পান। বাস পরিত্যাগ করা স্থির করিয়াছি, সর্ব্বস্ব বিক্রয় করিয়া আমি টাকা পাঠাইয়া দিব, যে যত টাকা চাহিবে তাহাকে তাহাই দিব।

বিন্দু। জেলদারগা টাকার প্রয়াসী নহে, মাজিষ্ট্রেট সাহেবের ভয়ে পাচক ব্রাহ্মণ লইয়া যাইতে দিতেছে না।

নবীন। টাকাও দেও মিনতিও কর। আহা! বৃদ্ধি শরীর! তিন দিন অনাহার! এত বুঝাইলাম, এত মিনতি করিলাম—বলেন "নবীন তিন দিন গত হইলে আহার করি না করি বিবেচনা করিব, তিন দিনের মধ্যে এ পাপমুখে কিছুমাত্র দিব না।"

বিন্দু। কিরূপে পিতার উদরে দুটি অন্ন দিব তাহার কিছুই উপায় দেখিতেছি না। নীলকর-ক্রীতদাস মূঢ়মতি মাজিষ্ট্রেটের মুখ হইতে নিষ্ঠুর কারাবাসানুমতি নিঃসৃত হওয়াবধি পিতা যে চক্ষে হস্ত দিয়াছেন তাহা এখন পর্য্যন্ত নামাইলেন না। পিতার নয়নজলে হস্ত ভাসমান হইয়াছে, যে স্থানে প্রথম বসাইয়াছিলাম সেই স্থানেই উপবিষ্ট আছেন। নীরব, শীর্ণ কলেবর, স্পন্দহীন, মৃতকপোতবৎ কারাগার পিঞ্জরে পতিত আছেন। আজ চার দিন, আজ তাঁহাকে অবশ্যই আহার করাইব। আপনি বাড়ী যান, আমি প্রত্যহ পত্র প্রেরণ করিব।

নবীন। বিধাতঃ! পিতাকে কি কষ্টই দিতেছ। বিন্দু, তোমাকে রাত্রি দিন জেলে থাকিতে দেয় তাহা হইলেই আমি নিশ্চিন্ত হইয়া বাড়ী যাইতে পারি।

সাধু। আমি চুরি করি, আপনারা আমাকে চোর বল্যে ধরে দেন, আমি একবার করিব, তা হলেই আমাকে জেলে দেবে, আমি সেখানে কর্ত্তা মহাশয়ের চাকর হয়ে থাকিব।

নবীন। সাধু তুমি এমনি সাধুই বট। আহা! ক্ষেত্রমণির সাঙ্ঘাতিক পীড়ার সমাচারে তুমি যে ব্যাকুল তোমাকে যত শীঘ্র বাড়ী লইয়া যাইতে পারি ততই ভাল।

সাধু। (দীর্ঘ নিশ্বাস) বড়বাবু, মাকে গিয়ে কি দেখিতে পাব, আমার যে আর নাই।

বিন্দু। তোমাকে যে আরোক্ দিয়াছি উহা খাওয়াইলে অবশ্যই নিব্ব্যাধি হইবে, ডাক্তারবাবু আদ্যোপান্ত শ্রবণ করো্যে ঐ ঔষধ দিয়াছেন।

ডেপুটী ইনস্পেকটারের প্রবেশ

ডেপু। বিন্দুবাবু, আপনার পিতার খালাসের জন্য কমিসনর সাহেব বিশেষ করিয়া লিখিয়াছেন।

বিন্দু। লেফ্‌টেনাণ্ট গবর্ণর নিষ্কৃতি দিবেন সন্দেহ নাই।

নবীন। নিষ্কৃতির সমাচার কত দিনে আসিতে পারে?

বিন্দু। পোনের দিবসের অধিক হইবে না।

ডেপু। অমরনগরের আসিস্‌টাণ্ট মাজিষ্ট্রেট একজন মোক্তারকে এই আইনে ৬ মাস ফাটক দিয়াছিল তাহার ১৬ দিন জেলে থাকিতে হয়।

নবীন। এমন দিন কি হবে, গভরনর সাহেব অনুকূল হইয়া প্রতিকূল মাজিষ্ট্রেটের নিকৃষ্ট নিষ্পত্তি খণ্ডন করবেন?

বিন্দু। জগদীশ্বর আছেন, অবশ্যই করিবেন। আপনি যাত্রা করুন, অনেক দূর যাইতে হইবে।

নবীনমাধব, বিন্দুমাধব ও সাধুচরণের প্রস্থান

ডেপুটী। আহা দুই ভাই দুঃখে দগ্ধ হইয়া জীবন্মৃত হইয়াছেন। লেফ্‌টেনাণ্ট গভরনরের নিষ্কৃতি অনুমতি সহোদরদ্বয়ের মৃতদেহ পুনর্জ্জীবিত করিবে। নবীনবাবু অতি বীরপুরুষ, পরোপকারী, বদান্য, বিদ্যোৎসাহী, দেশহিতৈষী, কিন্তু নির্দ্দয় নীলকর কুজ্ঝটিকায় নবীনবাবুর সদ্‌গুণসমূহ মুকুলেই ম্রিয়মান হইল।

কালেজের পণ্ডিতদের প্রবেশ

আস্‌তে আজ্ঞা হয়।

পণ্ডিত। স্বভাবতঃ শরীর আমার কিঞ্চিৎ উষ্ণ, রৌদ্র সহ্য হয় না। চৈত্র বৈশাখ মাসে আতপতাপে উন্মত্ত হইয়া উঠি। কয়েক দিন শিরঃপীড়ায় সাতিশয় কাতর, বিন্দুমাধবের বিষম বিপদের সময় একবার আসিতে পারি নাই।

ডেপু। বিষ্ণুতৈলে আপনার উপকার দর্শিতে পারে। বিষ্ণুবাবুর জন্যে বিষ্ণুতৈল প্রস্তুত করা গিয়াছে, আপনার বাসায় আমি কল্য কিঞ্চিৎ প্রেরণ করিব।

পণ্ডিত। বড় বাধিত হলেম। ছেলে পড়ালে সহজ মানুষ পাগল হয় আমার তাহাতে এই শরীর।

ডেপু। বড় পণ্ডিত মহাশয়কে আর যে দেখিতে পাই নে?

পণ্ডিত। তিনি এ শ্ববৃত্তি ত্যাগ করিবার পন্থা করিতেছেন— সোনার চাঁদ ছেলে উপার্জ্জন করিতেছে, তাঁহার সংসার রাজার মত নির্ব্বাহ হইবে। বিশেষ বৃষকাষ্ঠ গলায় বন্ধন করে্য কালেজে যাওয়া আসা ভাল দেখায় না, বয়স তো কম হয় নাই।

বিন্দুমাধবের পুনঃ প্রবেশ

বিন্দু। পণ্ডিত মহাশয় এয়েছেন—

পণ্ডিত। পাপাত্মা এমত অবিচার করেছে। তোমরা শুনিতে পাও না, বড়দিনের সময় ঐ কুটিতে একাদিক্রমে দশ দিবস যাপন করে আসিয়াছে। উহার কাছে প্রজার বিচার! কাজির কাছে হিন্দুর পরোব।

বিন্দু। বিধাতার নির্ব্বন্ধ।

পণ্ডিত। মোক্তার দিয়াছিলে কাহাকে?

বিন্দু। প্রাণধন মল্লিককে।

পণ্ডিত। ওকেও মোক্তারনামা দেয়? অপর কোন ব্যক্তিকে দিলে উপকার দর্শিত। সকল দেবতাই সমান, ঠক্ বাচ্‌তে গাঁ উজোড়।

বিন্দু। কমিসনর সাহেব পিতার নিষ্কৃতির জন্য গবর্ণমেণ্টে রিপোর্ট করিয়াছেন।

পণ্ডিত। এক ভস্ম আর ছার, দোষগুণ কব কার। যেমন মাজিষ্ট্রেট তেমনি কমিসনার।

বিন্দু। মহাশয় কমিসনারকে বিশেষ জানেন না তাহাই এ কথাই বলিতেছেন। কমিসনার সাহেব অতি নিরপেক্ষ, নেটিবদের উন্নতি আকাঙ্ক্ষী।

পণ্ডিত। যাহা হউক, এক্ষণ ভগবানের আনুকূল্যে তোমার পিতার উদ্ধার হইলেই সকল মঙ্গল। জেলে কি অবস্থায় আছেন?

বিন্দু। সর্ব্বদা রোদন করিতেছেন এবং গত তিন দিন কিছুমাত্র আহার করেন নাই। আমি এখনই জেলে যাইব, আর এই সুসংবাদ বলিয়া তাঁহার চিত্ত বিনোদ করিব।

একজন চাপরাসির প্রবেশ

তুমি জেলের চাপরাসি না?

চাপ। মশাই এট্টু জল্‌দি করে জেলে আসেন। দারগা ডেকেচেন।

বিন্দু। আমার বাবাকে তুমি আজ দেখেছ।

চাপ। আপনি আসেন। আমি কিছু বল্‌তি পারি নে।

বিন্দু। চল বাপু। (পণ্ডিতের প্রতি) বড় ভাল বোধ হইতেছে না। আমি চলিলাম।

চাপরাসি ও বিন্দুমাধবের প্রস্থান

পণ্ডিত। চল আমরাও জেলে যাই. বোধ হয় কোন মন্দ ঘটনা হইয়া থাকিবে।

উভয়ের প্রস্থান।

তৃতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

ইন্দ্রাবাদের জেলখানা

গোলোকচন্দ্রের মৃতদেহ উড়ানি পাকান দড়িতে দোদুল্যমান।

জেলদারোগা এবং জমাদার আসীন

দারো। বিন্দুমাধববাবুকে কে ডাকিতে গিয়াছে?

জমা। মনিরদ্দি গিয়েছে। ডাক্তার সাহেব না এলে তো নাবান হইতে পারে না।

দারো। মাজিষ্ট্রেট সাহেবের আজ আসবার কথা আছে না?

জমা। আজ্ঞে না. তাঁর আর চার দিন দেরি হবে। শনিবারে শচীগঞ্জের কুটিতে সাহেবদের সাম্পিন্ পার্টি আছে. বিবিদের নাচ হবে। উড সাহেবের বিবি আমারদিগের সাহেবের সঙ্গে নইলে নাচিতে পারেন না. আমি যখন আরদালি ছিলাম দেখিয়াছি। উড সাহেবের বিবির খুব দয়া. একখান চিটিতে এ গোরিবকে জেলের জমাদ্দার করিয়া দিয়াছেন।

দারো। আহা! বিন্দু বাবু পিতা আহার করেন নাই বলিয়া কত বিলাপ করিয়াছেন. এ দশা দেখ্‌লে প্রাণত্যাগ করিবেন।

বিন্দুমাধবের প্রবেশ

সকলি পরমেশ্বরের ইচ্ছা।

বিন্দু। এ কি, এ কি, আহা! আহা! পিতার উদ্বন্ধনে মৃত্যু হইয়াছে। আমি যে পিতার মুক্তির সম্ভাবনা ব্যক্ত করিতে আসিতেছি, কি মনস্তাপ! (নিজ মস্তক গোলোকের বক্ষে রক্ষা করিয়া মৃতদেহ আলিঙ্গনপূর্ব্বক ক্রন্দন) পিতা আমাদিগের মায়া একেবারে পরিত্যাগ করিলেন! বিন্দুমাধবের ইংরাজী বিদ্যার গৌরব আর লোকের কাছে করবেন না? নবীনমাধবকে "স্বরপুর বৃকোদর" বলা শেষ হইল? বড় বধূকে "আমার মা. আমার মা", বলিয়া বিপিনের সহিত যে আনন্দ-বিবাদ তাহার সন্ধি করিলেন। হা! আহারান্বেষণে ভ্রমণকারী বকদম্পতির মধ্যে বক

ব্যাধকর্ত্তৃক হত হইলে শাবকবেষ্টিত বকপত্নী যেমন সঙ্কটে পড়ে জননী আমার তোমার উদ্বন্ধন সংবাদে সেইরূপ হইবেন—

দারো। (হস্ত ধরিয়া বিন্দুমাধবকে অন্তরে আনিয়া) বিন্দুবাবু, এখন এত অধীর হইবেন না। ডাক্তার সাহেবের অনুমতি লইয়া সত্বরে অমৃতঘটের ঘাটে লইয়া যাইবার উদ্যোগ করুন।

ডেপুটী ইন্‌স্পেক্টার এবং পণ্ডিতের প্রবেশ

বিন্দু। দারগা মহাশয়, আমাকে কিছু বলবেন না। যে পরামর্শ উচিত হয় পণ্ডিত মহাশয় এবং ডেপুটীবাবুর সহিত করুন, আমার শোকবিকারে বাক্যরোধ হইয়াছে, আমি জন্মের মত একবার পিতার চরণ বক্ষে ধারণ করিয়া বসি।

গোলোকের চরণ বক্ষে ধারণপূর্ব্বক উপবিষ্ট

পণ্ডিত। (ডেপুটী ইন্‌স্পেক্টারের প্রতি) আমি বিন্দুমাধবকে ক্রোড়ে করিয়া রাখি তুমি বন্ধন উন্মোচন কর—এ দেবশরীর এ নরকে ক্ষণকালও রাখা নয়—

দারো। মহাশয়, কিঞ্চিৎ কাল অপেক্ষা করিতে হইবে—

পণ্ডিত। আপনি বুঝি নরকের দ্বারপাল? নতুবা এমন স্বভাব হইবে কেন।

দারো। আপনি বিজ্ঞ, আমাকে অন্যায় ভর্ৎসনা করিতেছেন—

ডাক্তার সাহেবর প্রবেশ

ডাক্তার। হো, হো, বিন্দুমাধব! গড্‌স উইল—পণ্ডিত মহাশয় আসিয়াছেন, বিন্দুকে কালেজ ছাড়া হয় না।

পণ্ডিত। কালেজ ছাড়া বিধি হয় না।

বিন্দু। আমাদের বিষয় আশয় সব গিয়াছে, অবশেষ পিতা আমাদিগকে পথের ভিক্ষারি করিয়া লোকান্তর গমন করিলেন (ক্রন্দন) অধ্যয়ন আর কিরূপে সম্ভবে?

পণ্ডিত। নীলকর সাহেবেরা বিন্দুমাধবদিগের সর্ব্বস্ব লইয়াছে—

ডাক্তার। পাদরি সাহেবদের মুখে আমি প্লান্টার সাহেবদের কথা শুনিয়াছি এবং আমিও দেখিল। আমি মাতঙ্গনগরের কুটি হইতে আসিল, একটি গ্রামে বসিয়াছে, আমার পাল্কির নিকট দিয়া দুই জন রাইয়ত বাজারে যাইল, একজনের

হস্তে দুগ্‌দো আছে, আমি দুগ্‌দো কিনিতে চাহিল, এক রাইয়ত এক রাইয়তকে কিঞ্চিৎ করে বলিল "নীলমামদো, নীলমামদো" দুগ্‌দো রাখিয়া দৌড় দিল। আমি আর একজন রাইয়তকে জিজ্ঞাসা করিল, সে কহিল রাইয়ত দুই জন দাদনের ভয়ে পলাইয়াছে। আমি দাদন লইয়াছি আমার গুদামে যাইতে কি কারণ হইতে পারে। আমি বুঝিলাম আমাকে প্লান্টার লইয়াছে। রাইয়তের হস্তে দুগ্‌দো দিয়া আমি গমন করিল।

ডেপু। ভ্যালি সাহেবের কান্সারণের এক গ্রাম দিয়া পাদরি সাহেব যাইতেছিলেন। রাইয়তেরা তাঁহাকে দেখিয়া "নীলভূত বেরিয়েছে নীলভূত বেরিয়েছে" বলিয়া রাস্তা ছাড়িয়া স্ব স্ব গৃহে পলায়ন করিয়াছিল। কিন্তু ক্রমশঃ পাদরি সাহেবের বদান্যতা, বিনয় এবং ক্ষমা দর্শন করিয়া রাইয়তেরা বিস্ময়াপন্ন হইল এবং নীলকর-পীড়নাতুর প্রজাপুঞ্জের দুঃখে পাদরি সাহেব যত আন্তরিক বেদনা প্রকাশ করিতে লাগিলেন তাহারা তাঁহাকে ততই ভক্তি করিতে লাগিল। এক্ষণ রাইয়তেরা পরস্পর বলাবলি করে "এক ঝাড়ের বাঁশ বটে— কোনখানায় দুর্গাঠাকুরুণের কাঠাম, কোনখানায় হাড়ির ঝুড়ি।"

পণ্ডিত। আমরা মৃত শরীরটি লইয়া যাই।

ডাক্তার। কিঞ্চিৎ দেখিতে হইবে। আপনারা বাহিরে আনিতে পারেন।

বিন্দুমাধব এবং ডেপুটী ইনস্পেকটার বন্ধনমোচনপূর্ব্বক মৃতদেহ
লইয়া যাওন এবং সকলের প্রস্থান

পঞ্চমাঙ্ক

প্রথম গর্ভাঙ্ক

বেগুণবেড়ের কুটির দপ্তরখানার সম্মুখ

গোপীনাথ দাস এবং একজন গোপের প্রবেশ

গোপী। তুই এত খবর পেলি কেমন করো?

গোপ। মোরা হলাম পত্তিবাসী, সারাক্ষুণ্ডি যাওয়া আসা কত্তি লেগিচি, নুন না থাক্‌লি নুন চেয়ে আন্‌চি, তেলপলাড়া তেলপলাডাই আনলাম, ছেলেডা কান্তি লাগ্‌লো গুড় চেয়ে দেলাম—বসিগার বাড়ী সাতপুরুষ খেয়্যে মানুষ, মোরা আর ওনাদের খবর আকি নে?

গোপী। বিন্দুমাধবের বিবাহ হয় কোথায়?

গোপ। ঐ যে কি গাঁড়া বলে, কল্‌কাতার পচ্চিমি, যারা কায়েদ্‌গার পইতে কত্তি চেয়্‌লো—যে বামুন আচে ইদিরি খেব্‌য়ে ওটা যায় না আবার বামুন বেড়য়ে তোলে—ছোটবাবুর শ্বশুরগার মান বড়, গারনল্‌ সাহেব টুপি না খুলে এস্‌তি পারে না পাড়াগাঁয় ওরা কি মেয়ে দেয়? ছোট বাবুর ন্যাকাপড়া দেখে চাসার্গা মান্‌লে না। নোকে বলে সউরে মেয়েগুনো কিছু ঠমক মারা, আর ঘরো বাজারো চেনা যায় না, কিন্তু বসিগার বৌর মত শান্ত মেয়ে তো আর চোকি পড়ে না, গোমার মা পত্যই ওনাদের বাড়ী যায়, তা এই পাঁচ বচ্চোর বে হয়েচে একদিন মুখখান দ্যাখ্‌তি প্যালে না। যেদিন বে করে আনলে মোরা সেই দিন দেখেলাম—ভাবলাম সউরে বাবুরো র‍্যাংরাজ ঘ্যাসা, তাইতে বিবির ন্যাকাৎ মেয়ে পয়দা করেচে।

গোপী। বউটি সর্ব্বদাই শাশুড়ীর সেবায় নিযুক্ত আছে।

গোপ। দেওয়ানজী মশাই, বলবো কি, গোমার মা বল্লে, মোগার পাড়াতেও আষ্ট ছোট বউ না থাক্‌লি যেদিনি গলায় দড়ির খবর শুনেলো সেই দিনিই মাঠাকুরুণ মরতো—শুনেলেম সউরে মেয়েগুলো মিন্‌সেগার ভ্যাড়া করো আখে, আর মা বাপেরি না খাতি দিয়ে মারে, কিন্তু এ বউডোরে দেখে জান্‌লাম, এর্ডা কেবল গুজোব কথা।

গোপী। নবীন বসের মাও বোধ করি বউটিকে বড় ভাল বাসে।

গোপ। মাঠাকুরুণ যে পিরতিমির মধ্যি কারে ভাল না বাসেন তাও তো দেখতি পাই নে। আ! মাগি য্যান অন্নপুন্নো, তা তোমরা কি আর অন্ন একেচ যে তিনি পুন্নো হবেন—গোড়ার নীলি বুড়রে খেয়েচ, বুড়িরিও খাবে২ কত্তি নেগেচে।—

গোপী। চুপ কর গুওড়া, সাহেব শুনলে এখনি আমাবস্যা বার করবে।

গোপ। মুই কি করবো, তুমি তো খুঁচয়ে২ বিষ বাইর কত্তি নেগেচো। মোর কি সাধ, কুটিতি বসি গোড়ার শালারে গালাগালি করি।—

গোপী। আমার মনেতে কিছু দুঃখ হয়েছে—মিথ্যা মোকদ্দমা কর্য্যে মানী মানুষটোরে নষ্ট করলাম। নবীনের শিরঃপীড়া আর নবীনের মার এই মলিন দশা শুনে আমি বড় ক্লেশ পাইয়াছি।—

গোপ। ব্যাঙ্গের সর্দ্দি—দেওয়ানজী মশাই খাপা হবেন না, মুই পাগল ছাগল আছি একটা, তামাক সাজে আন্‌বো?

গোপী। গুওড়া নন্দর বংশ ভোগোলের শেষ।—

গোপ। সাহেবেরাই সব কত্তি নেগেচে, সাহেবেরা কামার আপনারা খাঁড়া, যেখানে পড়ায় সেখানে পড়ে। গোড়ার কুটিতে দ পড়ে, গেরামের নোক নেয়ে বাঁচে।—

গোপী। তুই গুওড়া বড় ভেমো, আমি আর শুনতে চাই না—তুই যা, সাহেবের আস্‌বার সময় হইয়েছে।—

গোপ। মুই চল্লাম, মোর দুদির হিসেবডা কর্য্যে মোরে কাল একটা টাকা দিতি হবে, মোরা গঙ্গাচ্ছানে যাব।—

প্রস্থান

গোপী। বোধ করি ঐ শিরঃপীড়ার উপরই কাল বজ্রাঘাত হবে। সাহেব তোমার পুষ্করিণীর পাড়ে নীল বুনবে, তা কেহ রাখিতে পারিবে না—সাহেবদের কিঞ্চিৎ অন্যায় বটে, গত বৎসরের টাকা না পেয়েও ৫০ বিঘা নীল করিতে এক প্রকার প্রবৃত্ত হয়েছে তাতেও মন উঠিল না; পূর্ব্ব মাঠের ধানি জমির কয়েকখানার জন্যেই এত গোলমাল, নবীন বসের দেওয়াই উচিত ছিল—শেতলাকে তুষ্ট রাখিতে পারিলেই ভাল। নবীন মরেও এক কামড় কামড়াবে।—(সাহেবকে দূরে দেখিয়া) এই যে শুভ্রকান্তি নীলাম্বর আসিতেছেন। আমাকে হয়তো বা সাবেক দেওয়ানের সঙ্গে কতক দিন থাক্‌তে হয়।

উডের প্রবেশ

উড। এ কথা যেন কেহ না জান্‌তে পারে, মাতঙ্গনগরের কুটিতে দাঙ্গা বড় হবে, লাটিয়াল সব সেখানে থাকবে। এখনকার জন্যে দশ জন পোদ সুড়কিওয়ালা জোগাড় কর্য্যে রাখ্‌বে—আমি যাবে, ছোট সাহেব যাব, তুমি যাবে। শালা কাচা গলায় বেঁধে বাড়াবাড়ি কত্তে পারবে না, বেমো আছে, কেমন করিয়া দারোগার মদৎ আন্তে পার্‌বে—

গোপী। ব্যাটারা যে কাতর হয়েছে, সড়কিওয়ালার আবশ্যক হবে না। হিন্দুর ঘরে গলায় দড়ি দিয়ে, বিশেষে জেলের ভিতরে মরা বড় দোষ এবং ধিক্কারাস্পদ। এই ঘটনাতে ব্যাটা বড় শাসিত হইয়াছে।

উড। তুমি বুঝিতেছ না, বাপের মরাতে রাস্‌কেলের সুখ হইল—বাপের ভয়েতে নীলের দাদন লইত, এখন বাঞ্চতের সে ভয় গেল, যেমন ইচ্ছা তেমনি কর্‌বে। শালা আমার কুটির বদনাম কর্য্যে দিয়াছে। হারাম্‌জাদাকে কাল আমি গ্রেপ্তার কর্‌বো, মজুমদারের সহিত দোস্ত করিয়া দিব। অমরনগরের মাজিষ্ট্রেটের মত হাকিম আইলে বজ্জাত সব কত্তে পারবে।

গোপী। মজুমদারের মোকদ্দমার যে সূত্র করিয়াছে যদি নবীন বসের এ বিভ্রাট না হতো তবে এত দিন ভয়ানক হইয়া উঠিত—এখনও কি হয় বলা যায় না, বিশেষ যে হাকিম আসিতেছেন তিনি শুনিয়াছি রাইয়তের পক্ষ আর মফস্বলে আইলে তাঁবু আনেন। ইহাতে কিছু গোল বোধ হয়, ভয়ও বটে—

উড। তোম্ ভয় ভয় কর্‌কে হাম্‌কো ডেক্ কিয়া, নীলকর সাহেবকো কোই কামমে ডর হ্যায়? গিধ্বড়কি শালা, তোমারা মোনাসেফ না হোয় কাম ছোড় দেও।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, কাযেই ভয় হয়—সাবেক দেওয়ান কয়েদ হতে তার পুত্র ৬ মাসের বাকি মাহিয়ানা লইতে আসিয়াছিল, তাহাতে আপনি দরখাস্ত করিতে বল্লেন, দরখাস্ত করিলে পর আপনি হুকুম দিলেন, কাগজ নিকাস ব্যতীত মাহিয়ানা দেওয়া যাইতে পারে না। ধর্ম্মাবতার, চাকর কয়েদ হলে বিচার এই?

উড। আমি জানি না? ও শালা, পাজি নেমক্‌হারাম বেইমান! মাহিয়ানার টাকায় তোমাদের কি হইতে থাকে? তোমরা যদি নীলের দামের টাকা ভক্ষণ না কর তবে কি ডেড়্‌লি কমিসন হইত? তা হইলে কি দুঃখী প্রজারা কাঁদিতে২ পাদ্‌রি সাহেবের কাছে যাইত? তোমরা শালারা সব নষ্ট করিয়াছ, মাল কম পড়িলে তোমার বাড়ী বেচিয়া লইব—অ্যার‍্যাণ্ট কাউয়ার্ড হেলিশ্ নেভ।

গোপী। আমরা, হুজুর, কসায়ের কুকুর—নাড়ীভুঁড়িতেই উদর পূর্ণ করি। ধর্ম্মাবতার, আপনারা, যদি মহাজনেরা যেমন খাতকের কাছে ধান আদায় করে, সেইরূপে নীল গ্রহণ করিতেন, তাহা হইলে নীলকুটির এত দুর্নাম হইত না, আমিন খালাসীরও প্রয়োজন থাকিত না, আর আমাকে "গুপে গুওটা গুপে গুওটা" বলিয়া সকল লোকে গাল দিত না।

উড। তুমি গুওটা ব্লাইগু, তোমার চক্ষু নাই—

একজন উমেদারের প্রবেশ

আমি এই চক্ষে দেখিয়াছি (আপন চক্ষু অঙ্গুলি দিয়া) মহাজনেরা ধানের ক্ষেত্রে যায় এবং রাইয়তদিগের সঙ্গে বিবাদ করে। তুমি এই ব্যক্তিকে জিজ্ঞাসা কর।

উমে। ধর্ম্মাবতার, আমি এ বিষয়ের অনেক দৃষ্টান্ত দিতে পারি। রাইয়তেরা বলে নীলকর সাহেবদের দৌলতে মহাজনের হাত হইতে রক্ষা পাইতেছি।

গোপী। (উমেদারের প্রতি জনান্তিকে) ওহে বাপু, বৃথা খোসামোদ। কর্ম্ম কিছু খালি নেই (উডের প্রতি) মহাজনেরা ধানের ক্ষেত্রে গমন করে এবং নিজ খাতকের সহিত বাদানুবাদ করে এ কথা যথার্থ বটে, কিন্তু এরূপ গমনের এবং বিবাদের নিগূঢ় মর্ম্ম অবগত হইলে শ্যামচাঁদ শক্তিশেলে অনাহারী প্রজারূপ-সুমিত্রা-নন্দন-নিচয়ের নিপতন, খাতকের শুভাভিলাষী মহাজন-মহাজনের ধান্যক্ষেত্রে ভ্রমণের সহিত তুলনা করিতেন না—আমাদের সঙ্গে মহাজনদের অনেক ভিন্নতা।

উড। আচ্ছা, আমারে বুঝাও। কিছু কারণ থাকিতে পারে, শালা লোক আমাদিগের সব কথা বলিতেছে, মহাজনের কথা কিছু বলে না।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার, খাতকদিগের সম্বৎসরের যত টাকা আবশ্যক সকলি মহাজনের ঘর হইতে আনে এবং আহারেব জন্য যত ধান্য প্রয়োজন তাহা মহাজনের গোলা হইতে লয়, বৎসরান্তে তামাক ইক্ষু তিল ইত্যাদি বিক্রয় করিয়া মহাজনের সুদ সমেত টাকা পরিশোধ করে অথবা বাজারদরে ঐ সকল দ্রব্য মহাজনকে দেয় এবং ধান্য যাহা জন্মে তাহা হইতে মহাজনের ধান্য দেড়া বাড়িতে অথবা সাড়ে সইয়ে বাড়িতে ফিরিয়া দেয়, ইহার পর যাহা থাকে তাহাতে ৩।৪ মাস ঘরখরচ করে। যদি দেশে অজন্মাবশতঃ কিম্বা খাতকের অসঙ্গত ব্যয় জন্য টাকা কিম্বা ধান্য বাকি পড়ে তাহা বকেয়া বাকি বলিয়া নতুন খাতায় লিখিত হয়, বকেয়া বাকি ক্রমে২ উসুল পড়িতে থাকে, মহাজনেরা কদাপিও খাতকের নামে নালিশ করে না, সুতরাং যাহা বাকি পড়ে তাহা মহাজনদিগের আপাততঃ

লোকসান বোধ হয় এই জন্য মহাজনেরা কখন২ মাঠে যায়, ধানের কারককীত রীতিমত হইতেছে কি না দেখে, খাজানা বলিয়া যত টাকা খাতকে চাহিয়াছে তদুপযুক্ত জমি বুনন হইয়াছে কি না তাহা অনুসন্ধান করিয়া জানে। কোন২ অদূরদর্শী খাতক প্রতারণা করিয়া অধিক টাকা লইয়া সর্ব্বদাই ঋণে বিব্রত হইয়া মহাজনের লোকসান করে এবং আপনারাও কষ্ট পায়, সেই কষ্ট নিবারণের জন্যেই মহাজনেরা মাঠে যায়, "নীলমামদো" হইয়া যায় না (জিব কেটে) ধর্ম্মাবতার এই নেড়ে হারামখোর বেটারা বলে।

উড। তোমায় ছাড়ন্তো শনি ধরিয়াছে নচেৎ তুমি এত অনুসন্ধান করিতেছ কি কারণ, নইলে তুই এত বেয়াদোব হইয়াছিস কেন? বজ্জাত, ইন্‌সেস্‌চিউয়স্ ব্রূট।

গোপী। ধর্ম্মাবতার গালাগালি খেতেও আমরা, পয়জার খেতেও আমরা, শ্রীঘর যেতেও আমরা, কুটিতে ডিস্‌পেনসারি স্কুল হইলেই আপনারা, খুন গুমি হইলেই আমরা। হুজুরের কাছে পরামর্শ করিতে গেলে রাগত হন, মজুমদারের মোকদ্দমায় আমার অন্তঃকরণ যে উচাটন হইয়াছে তা গুরুদেবই জানেন।

উড। বাঞ্চৎকে একটা সাহসী কার্য্য করিতে বলি, শালা ওমনি মজুমদারের কথা প্রকাশ করে—আমি বরাবর বলিয়া আসিতেছি তুমি শালা বড় না-লায়েক আছে—নবীন বস্‌কে শচীগঞ্জের গুদামে পাঠাইয়া কেন তুমি স্থির হও না।

গোপী। আপনি গরিবের মা বাপ, গোরিব চাকরের রক্ষার জন্য একবার নবীন বস্‌কে এ মোকদ্দমার কথা জিজ্ঞাসা করিলে ভাল হয়।

উড। চপ্‌রাও, ইউ ব্যাসটার্ড অভ্ হোরস বিচ্। তেরা ওয়াস্তে হাম কুত্তাকাসাৎ মুলাকাৎ করেগা, শালা কাউয়ার্ড কায়েত বাচ্ছা (পদাঘাতে গোপীর ভূমিতে পতন) কমিস্যনে তোকে সাক্ষী দিতে পাঠাইলে তুই হারামজাদা সর্ব্বনাশ কর্ত্তিস ডেভিলিষ নিগার! (আর দুই পদাঘাত) এই মুখে তোম্ কাওটকা মাফিক কাম্, ডেগা—শালা কায়েত—কাল্‌কো হাম্ দেখ্‌কে হাম তোম্‌কো আপ্‌সে জেলমে ভেজ দেগা!

উড এবং উমেদারের প্রস্থান

গোপী। (গাত্র ঝাড়িতে২ উঠিয়া) সাত শত শকুনি মরিয়া একটি নীলকরের দেওয়ান হয় নচেৎ অগণনীয় মোজা হজম হয় কেমন করো্যে? কি পদাঘাতই করিতেছে, বাপ! বেটা যেন আমার কালেজ আউট বাবুদের গৌণপরা মাগ।

(নেপথ্যে) ডেওয়ান, ডেওয়ান।

গোপী। বন্দা হাজির। এবার কার পালা—
"প্রেমসিন্ধু নীরে বহে নানা তরঙ্গ।"

গোপীর প্রস্থান

দ্বিতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

নবীনমাধবের শয়নঘর

আদুরী বিছানা করিতে২ ক্রন্দন

আদুরী। আহা! হা হা, কনে যাব, পরাণ ফ্যাটে বার হলো, এমন কর্‌ল্যেও ম্যারেচে কেবল ধুক ধুক কত্তি নেগেচে, মাঠাকুরুণ দেখে বুক ফ্যাটে মরে যাবে। কুটি ধর্‌ল্যে নিয়ে গিয়েচে ভেবে তানারা গাচ্‌তলায় আঁচ্‌ড়া পিচ্‌লি করে কান্তি নেগেচেন, কোলে কর্‌ল্যে যে মোদের বাড়ি পানে আন্‌লে তা দেখ্‌তি পালেন না।

(নেপথ্যে) আদুরী, আমরা ঘরে নিয়ে যাব।

আদুরী। তোমরা ঘরে নিয়ে এস, তানারা কেউ এখানে নেই।

মূর্চ্ছাপন্ন নবীনমাধবকে বহন করতঃ সাধু এবং তোরাপের প্রবেশ

সাধু। (নবীনমাধবকে শয্যায় শয়ন করাইয়া) মাঠাকুরুণ কোথায়?

আদুরী। তানারা গাচতলায় দেঁড়ুয়্যে দেখ্‌তি নেগেলেন, (তোরাপকে দেখায়ে) ইনি যখন নে পেলয়্যে গ্যালেন মোরা ভাবলাম কুটি নিয়ে গেল, তানারা গাছতলায় আঁচ্‌ড়া পিচ্‌ড়ি কত্তি নেগ্‌লো, মুই নোক ডাক্‌তি বাড়ী আলাম। মরা ছেলে দেখে মাঠাকুরুণ কি বাঁচবে? তোমরা এট্টু দাঁড়াও মুই তানাদের ডাকে আনি।

আদুরীর প্রস্থান

পুরোহিতের প্রবেশ

পুরো। হা বিধাতঃ! এমন লোককেও নিপাত করিলে। এত লোকের অন্ন রহিত হইল! বড়বাবু যে আর গাত্রোত্থান করেন এমন বোধ হয় না।

সাধু। পরমেশ্বরের ইচ্ছা, তিনি মৃত মনুষ্যকেও বাঁচাইতে পারেন।

পুরো। শাস্ত্রমতে তেরাত্রে বিন্দুমাধব ভাগীরথীতীরে পিণ্ডদান করিয়াছেন, কেবল কর্ত্রীঠাকুরাণীর অনুরোধে মাসিক শ্রাদ্ধের আয়োজন। শ্রাদ্ধের পর এ স্থান

হইতে বাস উঠাইবার স্থির হইয়াছিল এবং আমাকে বলিয়াছিলেন আর ও দুর্দ্দান্ত সাহেবদিগের সহিত দেখাও করিবেন না, তবে অদ্য কি জন্য গমন করিলেন?

সাধু। বড়বাবুর অপরাধ নাই, বিবেচনারও ত্রুটি নাই। মাঠাকুরণ এবং বউঠাকুরুণ অনেকরূপ নিষেধ করিয়াছিলেন, তাঁহারা বলিলেন "যে কএক দিন এখানে থাকা যায় আমরা কুআর জল তুলিয়া স্নান করিব, অথবা আদুরী পুষ্করিণী হইতে জল আনিয়া দেবে, আমাদিগের কোন ক্লেশ হইবে না"। বড়বাবু বলিলেন "আমি ৫০ টাকা নজর দিয়া সাহেবের পায় ধরিয়া পুষ্করিণীর পাড়ে নীল করা রহিত করিব, এ বিপদে বিবাদের কোন কথা কহিব না" এই স্থির করিয়া বড়বাবু আমাকে আর তোরাপকে সঙ্গে লইয়া নীলক্ষেত্রে গমন করিলেন এবং কাঁদিতে২ সাহেবকে বলিলেন "হুজুর আমি আপনাকে ৫০ টাকা সেলামি দিতেছি, এ বৎসর এ স্থানটায় নীল করবেন না, আর যদি এই ভিক্ষা না দেন তবে টাকা লইয়া গোরিব পিতৃহীন প্রজার প্রতি অনুগ্রহ করিয়া শ্রাদ্ধের নিয়ম ভঙ্গের দিন পর্য্যন্ত বুনন রহিত করুন।" নরাধম যে উত্তর দিয়াছিল তাহা পুনরুক্তি করিলেও পাপ আছে, এখনও শরীর রোমাঞ্চিত হইতেছে, বেটা বল্যে "যবনের জেলে চোর ডাকাইতের সঙ্গে তোর পিতার ফাঁস হইয়াছে, তার শ্রাদ্ধে অনেক ষাঁড় কাটিতে হইবে সেই নিমিত্তে টাকা রাখিয়া দে" এবং পায়ের জুতা বড়বাবুর হাঁটুতে ঠেকাইয়া কহিল, "তোর বাপের শ্রাদ্ধে ভিক্ষা এই।"

পুরো। নারায়ণ! নারায়ণ! (কর্ণে হস্ত দান)

সাধু। অমনি বড়বাবুর চক্ষু রক্তবর্ণ হইল, অঙ্গ থর থর করিয়া কাঁপিতে লাগিল, দন্ত দিয়া ঠোঁট কামড়াইতে লাগিলেন এবং ক্ষণেক কাল নিস্তব্ধ হয়্যে থেকে সজোরে সাহেবের বক্ষঃস্থলে এমন একটি পদাঘাত করিলেন, বেটা বেনার বোঝার ন্যায় ধপাৎ করিয়া চিৎ হইয়া পড়িল। কেশে ঢালী, যে এখন কুটির জমাদার হইয়াছে, সেই বেটা ও আর দশ জন সুড়কীওয়ালা, বড়বাবুকে ঘেরাও করিল, ইহাদিকে বড়বাবু একবার ডাকাতি মাদ্দা হইতে বাঁচাইয়াছেন, বেটারা বড়বাবুকে মারিতে একটু চক্ষুলজ্জা বোধ করিল, বড়সাহেব উঠিয়া জমাদ্দারকে একটা ঘুসি মারিয়া তাহার হাতের লাঠি লইয়া বড়বাবুর মাথায় মারিল, বড়বাবুর মস্তক ফাটিয়া গেল, এবং অচৈতন্য হইয়া ভূমিতে পড়িলেন, আমি অনেক যত্ন করিয়াও গোলের ভিতর যাইতে পারিলাম না, তোরাপ দূরে দাঁড়াইয়া দেখিতেছিল, বড়বাবুকে ঘেরাও করিতেই একগুঁয়ে মহিষের মত দৌড়ে গোল ভেদ করে্য বড়বাবুকে কোলে লইয়া বেগে প্রস্থান করিল।

তোরাপ। মোরে বল্লেন, "তুই এট্টু তফাৎ থাক্ জানি কি ধরা পাকড়া কর্য়ে নে যাবে" মোর উপর সুমিন্দিদের বড় গোষা, মারামারি হবে জানলি মুই কি নুকয়ে থাকি। এট্টু আগে যাতি পাল্লে বড়বাবুকে বেঁচ্য়ে আন্‌তি পাত্তাম, আর দুই সমন্দিরি বরকোৎ বিবির দরগায় জবাই কত্তাম। বড়বাবুর মাতা দেখে মোর হাত পা প্যাটের মধ্যে গেল, তা সমিন্দিগার মারবো কখন—আল্লা! বড়বাবু মোরে এত বার বাঁচালে মুই বড়বাবুরি অ্যাকবার বাঁচাতি পাল্লাম না। (কপালে ঘা মারিয়া রোদন)

পুরো। বুকে যে একটা অস্ত্রের ঘা দেখিতেছি।

সাধু। তোরাপ গোলের মধ্যে পৌঁছিবামাত্র ছোট সাহেব পতিত বড়বাবুর উপর এক তলোয়ারের কোপ মারে, তোরাপ হস্ত দিয়া রক্ষা করে, তোরাপের বাম হস্ত কাটিয়া যায়, বড়বাবুর বুকে একটু খোঁচা লাগে।

পুরো। (চিন্তা করিয়া)

"বন্ধুস্ত্রীভৃত্যবর্গস্য বুদ্ধেঃ সত্বস্য চাত্মনঃ।
আপন্নিকষপাষাণে নরো জানাতি সারতাং॥"

বড় বাড়ীর জনপ্রাণী দেখিতেছি না, কিন্তু অপর গ্রামনিবাসী ভিন্ন জাতি তোরাপ বড়বাবুর নিকটে বস্যে রোদন করিতেছে। আহা! গোরিব খেটেখেগো লোক, হস্তখানি একেবারে কাটিয়া দিয়াছে—উহার মুখ রক্তমাখা কিরূপে হইল?

সাধু। ছোট সাহেব উহার হস্তে তলোয়ার মারিলে পর, নেজ মাড়িয়ে ধরিয়ে বেঁজী যেমন ক্যাচ ক্যাচ করিয়া কাম্‌ড়ে ধরে, তোরাপ জ্বালার চোটে বড় সাহেবের নাক কাম্‌ড়ে লইয়ে পালাইয়াছিল।

তোরাপ। নাক্‌টা মুই গাঁটি গুঁজে নেকিচি, বড়বাবু বেঁচে উটলি দ্যাখাবো, এই দেখ (ছিন্ন নাসিকা দেখাওন) বড়বাবু যদি আপনি পলাতি পাত্তেন, সমিন্দির কাণ দুটো মুই ছিঁড়ে আন্‌তাম, খোদার জীব পরাণে মাত্তাম না।

পুরো। ধর্ম্ম আছেন, শূর্পণখার নাসিকাচ্ছেদে দেবগণ রাবণের অত্যাচার হইতে ত্রাণ পাইয়াছিলেন, বড় সাহেবের নাসিকাচ্ছেদে প্রজারা নীলকরের দৌরাত্ম্য হইতে মুক্তি পাইবে না?

তোরাপ। মুই এখন ধানের গোলার মধ্যি নুক্‌য়ো থাকি, নাত কর্য়ে পেলয়্যে যাব, সমিন্দি নাকের জন্যি গাঁ নসাতলে পেট্‌য়ে দেবে।

নবীনমাধবের বিছানার কাছে মাটিতে দুইবার সেলাম করিয়া প্রস্থান

সাধু। কর্ত্তা মহাশয়ের গঙ্গালাভ শুনে মাঠাকুরুণ যে ক্ষীণ হয়েচেন, বড়বাবুর এ দশা দেখিবামাত্র প্রাণত্যাগ করিবেন সন্দেহ নাই—এত জল দিলাম, বুকে হাত বোলালাম, কিছুতেই চেতন হইল না, আপনি এক বার ডাকুন দিকি।—

পুরো। বড়বাবু! বড়বাবু! নবীনমাধব! (সজলনয়নে) প্রজাপালক! অন্নদাতা! —চক্ষু নাড়িতেছেন। আহা! জননী এখনি আত্মহত্যা করিবেন। উদ্বন্ধনবার্ত্তা শ্রবণে প্রতিজ্ঞা করিয়াছেন দশ দিবস পাপ পৃথিবীর অন্ন গ্রহণ করিবেন না, অদ্য পঞ্চম দিবস, প্রত্যূষে নবীনমাধব জননীর গলা ধরিয়া অনেক রোদন করিলেন এবং বলিলেন "মাতঃ যদি অদ্য আপনি আহার না করেন তবে মাতৃ আজ্ঞা লঙ্ঘন জনিত নরক মস্তকে ধারণপূর্ব্বক আমি হবিষ্য করিব না উপবাসী থাকিব।" তাহাতে জননী নবীনের মুখ চুম্বন করিয়া কহিলেন "বাবা আমি রাজমহিষী ছিলেম রাজমাতা হলেম, আমার মনে কিছু খেদ থাকিত না, যদি মরণকালে তাঁর চরণ একবার মস্তকে ধারণ করিতে পারিতাম, এমন পুণ্যাত্মার অপমৃত্যু হইল? এই কারণে আমি উপবাস করিতেছি! দুঃখিনীর ধন তোমরা, তোমার এবং বিন্দুমাধবের মুখ চেয়ে আমি অদ্য পুরোহিত ঠাকুরের প্রসাদ গ্রহণ করিব, তুমি আমার সম্মুখে চক্ষের জল ফেল না" বলিয়া নবীনকে পঞ্চম বর্ষের শিশুর ন্যায় ক্রোড়ে ধারণ করিলেন।

নেপথ্যে বিলাপসূচক ধ্বনি

আসিতেছেন।

সাবিত্রী, সৈরিন্ধ্রী, সরলতা, আদুরী, রেবতী, নবীনের খুড়ী এবং অন্যান্য প্রতিবাসিনীর প্রবেশ

ভয় নাই জীবিত আছেন—

সাবিত্রী। (নবীনের মৃতবৎ শরীর দর্শন করিয়া) নবীনমাধব! বাবা আমার, বাবা আমার, বাবা আমার, কোথায়, কোথায়, কোথায়—উহুহু!

মূর্চ্ছিত হইয়া পতন

সৈরি। (রোদন করিতে২) ছোটবউ, তুমি ঠাকুরুণকে ধর, আমি প্রাণকান্তকে একবার প্রাণ ভরে দর্শন করি (নবীনমাধবের মুখের নিকট উপবিষ্টা)

পুরো। (সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রতি) মা, তুমি পতিব্রতা সাধ্বী সতী, তোমার শরীর সুলক্ষণে মণ্ডিত, পতিরতা সুলক্ষণা ভার্য্যার ভাগ্যে মৃত পতিও জীবিত হয়, চক্ষু নাড়িতেছেন, নির্ভয়ে সেবা কর। সাধু, কর্ত্রী ঠাকুরাণীর জ্ঞান সঞ্চার হওয়া পর্য্যন্ত, তুমি এখানে থাক।

প্রস্থান

সাধু। মাঠাকুরুণের নাকে হাত দিয়ে দেখ দেখি, মৃত শরীর অপেক্ষাও শরীর স্থির দেখিতেছি।

সয়। (নাসিকায হস্ত দিয়া রেবতীর প্রতি মৃদুস্বরে) নিশ্বাস বেশ বহিতেছে কিন্তু মাথা দিয়ে এমন আগুন বাহির হতেচে যে আমার গলা পুড়ে যাচ্যে।

সাধু। গোমস্তা মহাশয় কবিরাজ আন্‌তে গিয়ে সাহেবদের হাতে পড়্লেন নাকি? আমি কবিরাজের বাসায় যাই।

প্রস্থান

সৈরি। আহা! আহা! প্রাণনাথ! যে জননীর অনাহারে এত খেদ করিতেছিলে, যে জননীর ক্ষীণতা দেখিয়া রাত্রিদিন পদসেবায় নিযুক্ত ছিলে, যে জননী কয়েক দিবস তোমাকে ক্রোড়ে না করিয়া নিদ্রা যাইতে পারিতেন না সেই জননী তোমার নিকটে মূর্চ্ছিত হইয়া পতিত আছেন, একবার দেখিলে না (সাবিত্রীকে অবলোকন করিয়া) আহা! হা! বৎসহারা হাম্মারবে ভ্রমণকারিণী গাভী সর্পাঘাতে পঞ্চত্বপ্রাপ্ত হইয়া প্রান্তরে যেরূপ পতিত হইয়া থাকে, জীবনাধার-পুত্রশোকে জননী সেইরূপ ধরাশায়িনী হইয়া আছেন—প্রাণনাথ! একবার নয়ন মেল্যে দেখ, একবার দাসীরে অমৃতবচনে দাসী বল্যে ডেকে কর্ণ কুহর পরিতৃপ্ত কর—মধ্যাহ্নসময় আমার সুখ-সূর্য্য অস্তগত হইল—আমার বিপিনের উপায় কি হইবে (রোদন করিতে২ নবীনমাধবের বক্ষের উপর পতন)

সর। ও গো তোমরা দিদিকে কোলে কর্য়ে ধর।

সৈরি। (গাত্রোত্থান করিয়া) আমি অতি শিশুকালে পিতৃহীন হয়েছিলাম, আহা! এই কাল নীলের জন্যেই পিতাকে কুটিতে ধর্য়ে নিয়ে যায়, পিতা আর ফিরিলেন না। নীলকুটি তাঁর যমালয় হইল কাঙ্গালিনী জননী আমার আমায় নিয়ে মামার বাড়ী যান, পতিশোকে সেইখানে তাঁর মৃত্যু হয়, মামারা আমাকে মানুষ করেন, আমি মালিনীর হস্ত হইতে হঠাৎ পতিত পুষ্পের ন্যায় পথে পতিত হইয়াছিলাম, প্রাণনাথ আমাকে আদর কর্য়ে তুলে লয়্যে গৌরব বাড়াইয়াছিলেন, আমি জনক জননীর শোক ভুলে গিয়েছিলাম, প্রাণকান্তের জীবনে পিতামাতা আমার পুনর্জ্জীবিত হইয়াছিলেন, (দীর্ঘনিশ্বাস) আমার সকল শোক নূতন হইতেছে, আহা! সর্ব্বাচ্ছাদক স্বামিহীন হইলে আমি আবার পিতামাতাবিহীন পথের কাঙ্গালিনী হইব।

ভূতলে পতন

খুড়ী। (হস্তধারণপূর্ব্বক উত্তোলন করিয়া) ভয় কি? উতলা হও কেন, মা! বিন্দুমাধবকে ডাক্তার আন্‌তে লিখে দিয়াছে. ডাক্তার আইলেই ভাল হবেন।

সৈরি। সেজো ঠাকুরুণ, আমি বালিকাকালে সেঁজোতির ব্রত করিয়াছিলাম, আলপনায় হস্ত রাখিয়া বল্যেছিলাম, যেন রামের মত পতি পাই, কৌশল্যার মত শাশুড়ী পাই, দশরথের মত শ্বশুর পাই, লক্ষ্মণের মত দেবর পাই, সেজো ঠাকুরুণ! বিধাতা আমাকে সকলি আশার অধিক দিয়াছিলেন, আমার তেজঃপুঞ্জ প্রজাপালক রঘুনাথ স্বামী অবিরল অমৃত-মুখী বধূপ্রাণা কৌশল্যা শাশুড়ী; স্নেহপূর্ণ-লোচন প্রফুল্লবদন বধূমাতা বলেই চরিতার্থ, দশ দিক আলো করা শ্বশুর; শারদকৌমুদীবিনিন্দিত বিমল বিন্দুমাধব আমার সীতাদেবীর লক্ষ্মণ দেবর অপেক্ষাও প্রিয়তর। মা গো! সকলি মিলেছে কেবল একটি ঘটনার অমিল দেখিতেছি—আমি এখনও জীবিত আছি, রাম বনে গমন করিতেছেন, সীতার সহগমনের কোন উদ্যোগ দেখিতেছি না। আহা! আহা! পিতার অনাহারে মরণশ্রবণে সাতিশয় কাতর ছিলেন, পিতার পারণের জন্যেই প্রাণনাথ কাচা গলায় থাকিতে থাকিতেই স্বর্গধামে গমন করিতেছেন (একদৃষ্টিতে মুখাবলোকন করিয়া) মরি, মরি, নাথের ওষ্ঠাধর একবারে শুষ্ক হইয়া গিয়াছে—ওগো তোমরা আমার বিপিনকে একবার পাঠশালা হতে ডেকে এনে দাও, আমি একবার (সাশ্রুনয়নে) বিপিনের হাত দিয়া স্বামীর শুষ্ক মুখে একটু গঙ্গাজল দি।

মুখের উপর মুখ দিয়া অবস্থিতি

সকলে। আহা! হা!

খুড়ী। (গাত্র ধরিয়া তুলিয়া) মা, এখন এমন কথা মুখে এনো না, (ক্রন্দন) মা, যদি বড়দিদির চেতন থাক্‌তো তবে এ কথা শুনে বুক ফেটে মর্‌তেন।

সৈরি। মা স্বামী আমার ইহলোকে বড় ক্লেশ পেয়েছেন, তিনি পরলোকে পরম সুখী হন এই আমার বাসনা। প্রাণনাথ! দাসী তোমার যাবজ্জীবন জগদীশ্বরকে ডাক্‌বে, প্রাণনাথ! তুমি পরম ধার্ম্মিক, পরোপকারী, দীনপালক, তোমাকে অনাথবন্ধু বিশ্বেশ্বর অবশ্যই স্থান দিবেন। আহা! হা! জীবনকান্ত! দাসীকে সঙ্গে লইয়া যাও তোমার দেবারাধনার পুষ্প তুলিয়া দিবে।

আহা, আহা, মরি মরি এ কি সর্ব্বনাশ।
সীতা ছেড়ে রাম বুঝি যায় বনবাস॥
কি করিব কোথা যাব কিসে বাঁচে প্রাণ।
বিপদ-বান্ধব কর বিপদে বিধান॥

রক্ষ রক্ষ রমানাথ। রমণী-বিভব।
নীলানলে হয় নাশ নবীনমাধব॥
কোথা নাথ দীননাথ! প্রাণনাথ যায়।
অভাগিনী অনাথিনী করিয়ে আমায়॥

(নবীনের বক্ষে হস্ত দিয়া দীর্ঘ নিশ্বাস)

পরিহরি পরিজন পরমেশ পায়:
লয় গতি দিয়ে পতি বিপদে বিদায়॥
দয়ার পয়োধি তুমি পতিতপাবন।
পরিণামে কর ত্রাণ জীবন-জীবন॥

সর। দিদি, ঠাকুরুণ চক্ষু মেলিয়াছেন, কিন্তু আমার প্রতি মুখবিকৃত করিতেছেন (রোদন করিয়া) দিদি, ঠাকুরুণ আমার প্রতি এমন সকোপ নয়নে কখন ত দৃষ্টি করেন নাই।

সৈরি। আহা, আহা, ঠাকুরুণ সরলতাকে এম্নি ভাল বাসেন যে এ অজ্ঞানবশতঃ একটু রুষ্ট চক্ষে চাহিয়া সরলতা চাঁপাফুল বালির খোলায় ফেলিয়া দিয়াছেন—দিদি, কেঁদো না, ঠাকুরুণের চৈতন্য হইলে তোমায় আবার চুম্বন কর্‌বেন এবং আদরে পাগ্‌লীর মেয়ে বল্‌বেন।

গাত্রোত্থান করিয়া নবীনের নিকটে উপবিষ্ট, এবং কিঞ্চিৎ আহ্লাদ প্রকাশ করিয়া নবীনকে একদৃষ্টিতে অবলোকন করিতে২

সাবি। প্রসব বেদনার মত আর বেদনা নাই—কিন্তু যে অমূল্য রত্ন প্রসব করিয়াছি মুখ দেখে সব দুঃখ গেল (রোদন করিতে২) আরে দুঃখ! বিবি যদি যমকে চিটি লেখে কত্তারে না মার্‌তো, তবে সোণার খোকা দেখে কত আহ্লাদ কত্তেন (হাততালি)।

সকলে। আহা! আহা! পাগল হয়েচেন।

সাবি। (সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রতি) দাইবউ—ছেলে একবার আমার কোলে দাও, তাপিত অঙ্গ শীতল করি, কত্তার নাম কর্য়ে খোকার মুখে একবার চুমো খাই (নবীনের মুখ চুম্বন)

সৈরি। মা আমি যে তোমার বড় বউ, মা দেখ্‌তে পাচ্চ না—তোমার প্রাণের রাম অচৈতন্য হয়্যে পড়ে রয়েচেন, কথা কহিতে পাচ্যেন না।

সাবি। ভাতের সময় কথা ফুট্‌বে, আহা হা! কত্তা থাক্‌লে আজ কত আনন্দ, কত বাজ্‌না বাজ্‌তো (ক্রন্দন)।

সৈরি। সর্ব্বনাশের উপর সর্ব্বনাশ! ঠাকুরুণ পাগল হলেন?

সর। দিদি জননীকে বিছানা ছাড়া করিয়া দাও, তাঁরে আমি শুশ্রূষা দ্বারা সুস্থ করি।

সাবি। এমন চিটিও লিখেছিলে, এমন আহ্লাদের দিন বাজনা হলো না।

চারি দিকে অবলোকন করিয়া সবলে গাত্রোত্থানপূর্ব্বক সরলতার নিকটে গিয়া

তোমার পায়ে পড়ি বিবি ঠাকুরুণ আর একখান চিটি লিখে যমের বাড়ী থেকে কত্তারে ফিরে এনে দাও, তুমি সাহেবের বিবি, তা নইলে আমি তোমার পায়ে ধত্তাম।

সর! মা গো তুমি আমাকে জননী অপেক্ষাও স্নেহ কর, মা তোমার মুখে এমন কথা শুনে আমি যমযন্ত্রণা হইতেও অধিক যন্ত্রণা পাইলাম। (দুই হস্তে সাবিত্রীকে ধরিয়া) মা তোমার এ দশা দেখে আমার অন্তঃকরণে অগ্নিবৃষ্টি হইতেছে।

সাবি। খান্‌কি বিটি, পাজি বিটি, মেলেচ্ছো বিটি, আমাকে একাদশীর দিন ছুঁয়ে ফেল্লি (হস্ত ছাড়ায়ন)।

সর। মা গো, আমি তোমার মুখে এ কথা শুনে আর পৃথিবীতে থাকিতে পারিনে (সাবিত্রীর পদদ্বয় ধারণপূর্ব্বক ভূমিতে শয়ন) মা আমি তোমার পাদপদ্মে প্রাণ ত্যাগ করিব।

সাবি। খুব হয়েচে, গস্তানি বিটি মরে গিয়েচে, কত্তা আমার সর্গে গিয়েচেন তুই আবাগী নরকে যাবি (হাস্য করিতে২ করতালি)।

সৈরি। (গাত্রোত্থান করিয়া) আহা! আহা! সরলতা আমার অতি সুশীলা, আমার শাশুড়ীর সাত আদরের বউ, জননীর মুখে কুবচন শুনে অতিশয় কাতর হয়েছে! (সাবিত্রীর প্রতি) মা তুমি আমার কাছে এস।

সাবি। দাইবউ ছেলে একা রেখে এলে বাছা, আমি যাই (দৌড়ে নবীনের নিকট উপবেশন)।

রেবতী। (সাবিত্রীর প্রতি) হ্যাগা মা, তুমি যে বল্যে থাক ছোটবউর মত বউ গাঁয় নেই, ছোটবউরি না খেব্য়ে তুমি যে খাও না, তুমি সেই ছোটবউরি খান্‌কি বল্যে গাল দিলে। হ্যাঁগা মা তুমি মোর কথা শোন্‌চো না—মোরা যে তোমাগার খায়ে মানুষ, কত যে খাতি দিয়েচো।

সাবি। আমার ছেলের আটকৌড়ের দিন আসিস্ তোরে জলপান দেব।

খুড়ী। বড়দিদি, নবীন তোমার বেঁচে উট্‌বে, তুমি পাগল হইও না।

সাবি। তুমি জান্‌লে কেমন করে? ও নাম তো আর কেউ জানে না, আমার শ্বশুর বল্যেছিলেন, বউমার ছেলে হোলে "নবীনমাধব" নাম রাখ্‌বো, আমি খোকা পেয়েচি ঐ নাম রাখ্‌বো, কত্তা বলতেন কবে খোকা হবে "নবীনমাধব" বল্যে ডাক্‌বো। (ক্রন্দন) যদি বেঁচে থাক্‌তেন আজ সে সাধ পুর্‌তো।

নেপথ্যে শব্দ

ঐ বাজ্‌না এয়েছে (হাততালি)।

সৈরি। কবিরাজ আসিতেছেন, ছোট বউ উঠে ওঘরে যাও।

করিবাজ ও সাধুচরণের প্রবেশ

সরলতা রেবতী এবং প্রতিবাসিনীদের প্রস্থান,

সৈরিন্ধ্রী অবগুণ্ঠনাবৃতা হইয়া এক পার্শ্বে দণ্ডায়মান

সাধু। এই যে মাঠাকুরুণ উঠে বসিয়াছেন।

সাবি। (রোদন করিয়া) আমার কত্তা নেই বল্যে কি তোমরা আমার এমন দিনে ঢোল্ বাড়ী রেখে এলে।

আদুরী। ওনার ঘটে কি আর জ্ঞেন আছে, উনি অ্যাকেবারে পাগল হয়েচেন। উনি ঐ বড় হালদারেরে বলচেন "মোর কচি ছেলে" আর ছোট হালদার্ণিরি বিবি বল্যে কত গালাগালি দেলেন, ছোট হালদার্ণি কেঁদে ককাতি নেগলো। তোমাদের বল্‌চেন বাজন্দেরে।

সাধু। এমন দুর্ঘটনা ঘটিয়াছে।

কবি। (নবীনের নিকট উপবিষ্ট হইয়া) একে পতিশোকে উপবাসী, তাহাতে নয়নানন্দ নন্দনের ঈদৃশী দশা—সহসা এরূপ উন্মত্তা হওয়া সম্ভব এবং নিদানসঙ্গত। নাড়ীর গতিকটা দেখা আবশ্যক, কর্ত্রী ঠাকুরুণ হস্ত দেন (হাত বাড়াইয়া)।

সাবি। তুই আঁটকুড়ীর ব্যাটা কুটির নোক্ তা হইলে ভাল মান্‌ষের মেয়ের হাত ধত্তে চাচ্চিস কেন্, (গাত্রোত্থান করিয়া) দাইবউ, ছেলে দেখিস্ মা, আমি জল খেয়ে আসি, তোরে একখান চেলির শাড়ী দেব।

প্রস্থান

কবি। আহা! জ্ঞানপ্রদীপ আর প্রজ্বলিত হইবে না. আমি হিমসাগল তৈল প্রেরণ করিব, তাহাই সেবন করা এক্ষণকার বিধি। (নবীনের হস্ত ধরিয়া) ক্ষীণতাধিক্যমাত্র, অপর কোন বৈলক্ষণ্য দেখিতেছি না। ডাক্তার ভায়ারা অন্য বিষয়ে গোবৈদ্য বটেন, কিন্তু কাটাকুটির বিষয়ে ভাল; ব্যয় বাহুল্য, কিন্তু একজন ডাক্তার আনা কর্ত্তব্য।—

সাধু। ছোটবাবুকে ডাক্তার সহিত আসিতে লেখা হইয়াছে।

কবি। ভালই হইয়াছে।—

চার জন জ্ঞাতির প্রবেশ

প্রথম। এমন ঘটনা হইবে তাহা আমরা স্বপ্নেও জানি না। দুই প্রহরের সময়, কেহ আহার করিতেছে, কেহ স্নান করিতেছে, কেহ বা আহার করিয়া শয়ন করিতেছে। আমি এখন শুনিতে পাইলাম।

দ্বিতীয়। আহা! মস্তকের আঘাতটি সাংঘাতিক বোধ হইতেছে; কি দুর্দৈব! অদ্য বিবাদ হইবার কোন সম্ভাবনা ছিল না, নচেৎ রাইয়তেরা সকলেই উপস্থিত থাকিত।

সাধু। দুই শত! রাইয়তে লাঠি হস্তে করিয়া মার২ করিতেছে, এবং "হা বড়বাবু! হা বড়বাবু!" বলিয়া রোদন করিতেছে। আমি তাহারদিগের স্ব২ গৃহে যাইতে কহিলাম, যেহেতু একটু পন্থা পাইলেই সাহেব নাকের জ্বালায় গ্রাম জ্বালাইয়া দিবে।

কবি। মস্তকটা ধৌত করিয়া আপাততঃ তার্পিণ তৈল লেপন কর; পশ্চাৎ সন্ধ্যাকালে আসিয়া অন্য ব্যবস্থা করিয়া যাইব। রোগীর গৃহে গোল করা ব্যাধ্যাধিক্যের মূল— কোনরূপ কথাবার্ত্তা এখানে না হয়।

কবিরাজ, সাধুচরণ এবং জ্ঞাতিগণের একদিকে, এবং আদুরীর অন্য দিকে প্রস্থান, সৈরিন্ধ্রীর উপবেশন। যবনিকা পতন।

তৃতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক

সাধুচরণের ঘর

ক্ষেত্রমণির শয্যাকণ্টকি, এক দিকে সাধুচরণ, অপরদিকে রেবতী উপবিষ্ট

ক্ষেত্র। বিছেনা ঝেড়ে পাত, ও, মা, বিছেনা ঝেড়ে দে।

রেবতী। যাদু মোর, সোনার চাঁদ মোর, ওমন ধারা কেন কচ্চো মা। বিছানা

ঝেড়্যে দিইচি মা, বিছানায় তো কিছু নেই রে মা, মোদের কঁ্যাতার ওপরে, তোমার কাকিমারা যে নেপ দিয়েচে তাই তে পেড়ে দিয়েচি মা।

ক্ষেত্র। স্যাঁকুলির কাঁটা ফোট্‌চে, মরি গ্যালাম, মা রে মলাম রে বাবার দিগি ফির্‌য়ে দে।

সাধু। (আস্তে২ ক্ষেত্রমণিকে ফিরায়ে, স্বগত) শয্যাকণ্টকি, মরণের পূর্ব্বলক্ষণ (প্রকাশে) জননী আমার, দরিদ্রের রতনমণি, মা, কিছু খাও না মা, আমি যে ইন্দ্রাবাদ হইতে তোমার জন্যে বেদানা কিনে এনিচি মা, তোমার যে চুনুরি শাড়ীতে বড় সাধ মা, তাও তো আমি কিনে এনেচি মা, কাপড় দেখে তুমি তো আহ্লাদ করিলে না মা।

রেবতী। মার মোর কত সাধ, বলেন সেমোন্‌তোনের সমে মোরে সাঁক্‌তির মালা দিতি হবে—আহা হা! মার মোর কি রূপ কি হয়েছে, কর্‌বো কি, বাপোরে বাপোঃ! (ক্ষেত্রমণির মুখের উপর মুখ দিয়া অবস্থিতি) সোণার ক্ষেত্র মোর কয়লাপানা হয়ে গিয়েচে, দেখ দেখ মার চকির মণি কনে গ্যাল।

সাধু। ক্ষেত্রমণি, ক্ষেত্রমণি, ভাল কর্যে চেয়ে দেখ্ না মা।

ক্ষেত্র। খোস্তা, কুড়ুল, মা! বাবা! আ! (পার্শ্ব পরিবর্ত্তন)

রেবতী। মুই কোলে তুলে নেই, মার বাছা মার কোলে ভাল থাক্‌বে। (অঙ্কে উত্তোলন করিতে উদ্যত)

সাধু। কোলে তুলিস্ নে, টাল্ যাবে।

রেবতী। এমন পোড়া কপাল করেলাম, আহা হা! হারাণ যে মোর মউর চড়া কাত্তিক, মুই হারাণের রূপ ভোল্‌বো ক্যামন কর্যে, বাপো! বাপো! বাপো!

সাধু। রেয়ে ছোঁড়া কখন গিয়েছে, এখনও এল না।

রেবতী। বড়বাবু মোরে বাগের মুখথে ফিরে এনে দিয়েলো। আঁটকুড়ির বেটা এমন কিলও মেরিলি, বাছার পেট খসে গেল, তারপর বাছারে নিয়ে টানাটানি। আহা! হা! দৌউত্র হয়েলো, রক্তোর দলা, তবু সব গড়ন দেখা দিয়েলো, আঙ্গুলগুলো পর্য্যন্ত হয়েলো। ছোট সাহেব মোর ক্ষেত্ররে খালে, বড় সাহেব বড়বাবুরি খালে। আহা হা! কাঙ্গালেরে কেউ রক্কে করে না।

সাধু। এমন কি পুণ্য করিছি যে দৌহিত্রের মুখ দর্শন করিব।

ক্ষেত্র। গা কেটে গেল—মাজা—ট্যাংরা মাচ্ হু—হু—হু--

রেবতী। নমীর আৎ বুঝি পোয়ালো, মোর সোণার পিত্তিমে জলে যায়, মোর উপায় হবে কি! মোরে মা বল্যে ডাক্‌বে কেডা, ই কত্তি নিয়ে এইলে।

সাধুর গলা ধরি ক্রন্দন

সাধু। চুপ কর্, এখন কাঁদিস্ নে, টাল্ যাবে।

রাইচরণ এবং কবিরাজের প্রবেশ

কবি। এক্ষণকার উপসর্গ কি? সে ঔষধ খাওয়ান হইয়াছিল?

সাধু। ঔষধ উদরস্থ হয় নাই—যাহা কিছু পেটের মধ্যে গিয়াছিল তাহাও তৎক্ষণাৎ বমন হইয়া গিয়াছে—এখন একবার হাতটা দেখুন দিকি, বোধ হইতেছে, চরম কালের পূর্ব্বলক্ষণ।

রেবতী। কাঁটা কাঁটা কত্তি নেগেচে, এত পুরু কর্যে বিছানা কর্যে দেলাম তবু মা মোর ছট্‌ফট্ কচ্চেন—আর একটু ভাল অষুধ দিয়ে পরাণ দান দিয়ে যাও—মোর বড় সাধের কুটুম্ব গো! (রোদন)

সাধু। নাড়ী পাওয়া যায় না।

কবি। (হস্ত ধরিয়া) এ অবস্থায় নাড়ী ক্ষীণ থাকা মঙ্গল লক্ষণ "ক্ষীণে বলবতী নাড়ী সা নাড়ী প্রাণঘাতিকা"।

সাধু। ঔষধ এ সময় খাওয়ান না খাওয়ান সমান, পিতা মাতার শেষ পর্য্যন্ত আশ্বাস, দেখুন যদি কোন পন্থা থাকে।

কবি। আতপ তণ্ডুলের জল আবশ্যক, পূর্ণমাত্রা সূচিকাভরণ সেবন করাই এক্ষণকার বিধি।

সাধু। রাইচরণ, ও ঘরে স্বস্ত্যয়নের জন্যে বড় রাণী যে আতপ চাল দিয়াছেন, তাহাই লইয়া আয়।

রাইচরণের প্রস্থান

রেবতী। আহা! অন্নপূন্নো কি চেতন আছেন, তা আপনি আলোচাল হাতে কর্যে মোর ক্ষেত্রমণির দেক্‌তি আস্‌বেন, মোর কপাল হতিই মাঠাকুরুণ পাগল হয়েচেন।

কবি। একে পতিশোকে ব্যাকুলা, তাহাতে পুত্র মৃতবৎ; ক্ষিপ্ততার ক্রমশঃ বৃদ্ধি হইতেছে, বোধ হয় কর্ত্রী ঠাকুরুণের নবীনের অগ্রে পরলোক হইবে, অতিশয় ক্ষীণা হইয়াছেন।

সাধু। বড়বাবুকে অদ্য কিরূপ দেখিলেন। আমার বোধ হয়, নীলকর নিশাচরের অত্যাচারাগ্নি বড়বাবু আপনার পবিত্র শোণিত দ্বারা নির্ব্বাপিত করিলেন। কমিসনে প্রজার উপকার সম্ভব বটে, কিন্তু তাহাতে ফল কি? চৈতন বিলের এক শত কেউটে সর্প আমার অঙ্গময় একেবারে দংশন করে তাহাও আমি সহ্য করিতে পারি, ইটের গাঁথনি উনানে সুঁদ্‌রি কাষ্ঠের জ্বালে প্রকাণ্ড কড়ায় টগ্‌বগ্ করিয়া ফুটিতেছে যে গুড়, তাহাতে অকস্মাৎ নিমগ্ন হইয়া খাবি খাওয়াও সহ্য করিতে পারি; অমাবস্যার রাত্রিতে হারে রে হৈ হৈ শব্দে নির্দ্দয় দুষ্ট ডাকাইতেরা সুশীল, সুবিদ্বান্ একমাত্র পুত্রকে বধ করিয়া, সম্মুখে পরমা সুন্দরী পতিপ্রাণা দশমাস গর্ভবতী সহধর্ম্মিণীর উদরে পদাঘাত দ্বারা গর্ভপাতন করিয়া সপ্তপুরুষার্জিত ধনসম্পত্তি অপহরণপূর্ব্বক আমার চক্ষু তলোয়ার ফলাকায় অন্ধ করিয়া দিয়া যায়, তাহাও সহ্য করিতে পারি; গ্রামের ভিতরে একটা ছাড়িয়া দশটা নীলকুটি স্থাপিত হয় তাহাও সহ্য করিতে পারি, কিন্তু এক মুহূর্ত্তের নিমিত্তেও প্রজাপালক বড়বাবুর বিরহ সহ্য করিতে পারি না।

কবি। যে আঘাতে মস্তকের মস্তিষ্ক বাহির হইয়াছে, ঐ সাংঘাতিক। সান্নিপাতিকের উপক্রম দেখিয়া আসিয়াছি, দুই প্রহর অথবা সন্ধ্যাকালে প্রাণত্যাগ হইবে। বিপিনের হস্ত দিয়া একটু গঙ্গাজল মুখে দেওয়া গেল, তাহা দুই কস বহিয়া পড়িল। নবীনের কায়স্তিনী পতিশোকে ব্যাকুলা, কিন্তু পতির সদ্‌গতির উপায়ানুরক্তা।

সাধু। আহা! আহা! মাঠাকুরুণ যদি ক্ষিপ্ত না হইতেন তবে এ অবস্থা দর্শন করিয়া বুক ফেটে মরিতেন। ডাক্তারবাবুও মাথার ঘা সাংঘাতিক বলিয়াছেন।

কবি। ডাক্তারবাবুটি অতি দয়াশীল, বিন্দুবাবু টাকা দিতে উদ্যোগী হইলে বলিলেন "বিন্দুবাবু তোমরা যে বিব্রত, তোমার পিতার শ্রাদ্ধ সমাধা হওয়ার সম্ভব নাই, এখন আমি তোমার কাছে কিছু লইতে পারি না, আমি যে বেহারায় আসিয়াছি সেই বেহারায় যাইব তাহাদের আপনার কিছু দিতে হবে না" দুঃশাসন ডাক্তার হল্যে কর্ত্তার শ্রাদ্ধের টাকা লইয়া যাইত। বেটাকে আমি দুই বার দেখিছি, বেটা যেমন দুর্মুখো তেমনি অর্থপিশাচ।

সাধু। ছোটবাবু ডাক্তারবাবুকে সঙ্গে করো্য ক্ষেত্রমণিকে দেখিতে আসিয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু কোন ব্যবস্থা করিলেন না। আমার নীলকর অত্যাচারে অন্নাভাব দেখে ক্ষেত্রমণির নাম করো্য ডাক্তারবাবু আমারে দুই টাকা দিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

কবি। দুঃশাসন ডাক্তার হল্যে হাত না ধরো্য বল্‌তো বাঁচ্‌বে না, আর তোমার গোরু বেচে টাকা লইয়া যাইত।

রেবতী। মুই সব্বস্ব বেচে টাকা দিতি পারি মোর ক্ষেত্রকে যদি কেউ বেঁচ্য়ে দেয়।

চাল লইয়া রাইচরণের প্রবেশ

কবি। চালগুলিন প্রস্তরের বাটিতে ধৌত করিয়া জল আনয়ন কর।

রেবতীর তণ্ডুল গ্রহণ

জল অধিক দিও না। এ বাটিটি তো অতি পরিপাটি দেখিতেছি।

রেবতী। মাঠাকুরুণ গয়ায় গিয়েলেন, অনেক বাটি এনেলেন, মোর ক্ষেত্রকে এই বাটিডে দিয়েলেন। আহা! সেই মাঠাকুরুণ মোর ক্ষেপে উটেচেন, গাল চেপ্ড়ে মরেন বল্যে হাত দুটো দড়ি দিয়ে বেঁদে এখেচে।

কবি। সাধু খল আনয়ন কর আমি ঔষধ বাহির করি।

ঔষধের ডিপা খুলন

সাধু। কবিরাজ মহাশয়, আর ঔষধ বাহির করিতে হইবে না, চক্ষের ভাব দেখুন দিকি; রাইচরণ এদিকে আয়।

রেবতী। ও মা মোর কপালে কি হলো! ও মা, মুই হারাণের রূপ ভোল্বো কেমন কর্য়ে, বাপো, বাপো,—ও ক্ষেত্র, ও ক্ষেত্র, ক্ষেত্রমণি, মা—আর কি কথা কবা না, মা মোর, বাপো, বাপো, বাপো (ক্রন্দন)।

কবি। চরম কাল উপস্থিত।

সাধু। রাইচরণ ধর্ ধর।

সাধুচরণ ও রাইচরণ দ্বারা শয্যাসহিত ক্ষেত্রকে বাহিরে লইয়া যাওন

রেবতী। মুই সোনার নক্কি ভেস্য়ে দিতি পারবো না মা রে, মুই কনে যাব রে—সাহেবের সঙ্গি থাকা যে মোর ছিল ভাল মা রে, মুই মুখ দেখে জুড়োতাম মা রে, হো, হো, হো।

পাছা চাপড়াইতে২ ক্ষেত্রমণির পশ্চাৎ ধাবন

কবি। মরি, মরি, মরি, জননীর কি পরিতাপ—সন্তান না হওয়াই ভাল।

প্রস্থান

চতুর্থ গর্ভাঙ্ক

গোলোক বসুর বাটীর দরদালান

নবীনমাধবের মৃত শরীর ক্রোড়ে করিয়া সাবিত্রী আসীনা

সাবি। আয় রে আমার জাদুমণির ঘুম আয়—গোপাল আমার বুক জুড়ানে ধন, সোনার চাঁদের মুখ দেখ্‌লে আমার সেই মুখ মনে পড়ে (মুখচুম্বন) বাছা আমার ঘুমায়ে কাদা হয়েচে (মস্তকে হস্তামর্ষণ) আহা মরি, মরি, মশায় কাম্‌ড়ে করেচে কি ?—গরমি হয় বল্যে কি করবো. আব মশারি না খাট্‌য়্যে শোব না। (বক্ষঃস্থলে হস্তমর্ষণ) মর্যে যাই মার প্রাণে কি সয়, ছারপোকায় এমনি কামড়েচে, বাছার কচি গা দিয়ে রক্ত ফুটে বেরুচ্চে। বাছার বিছানাটা কেউ কর্যে দেয় না; গোপালেরে শোয়াই কেমন কর্যে। আমার কি আর কেউ আছে. কর্ত্তার সঙ্গে সব গিয়েছে। (রোদন) ছেলে কোলে কর্যে কাঁদিতেছে, হা পোড়াকপালি! (নবীনের মুখাবলোকন কর্যে) দুঃখিনীর ধন আমার দেয়ালা করিতেছে। (মুখ চুম্বন করিয়া) না বাবা তোমারে দেখ্যে আমি সব দুঃখ ভুলে গিয়েচি আমি কাঁদিতেছি না (মুখ স্তন দিয়া) মাই খাও. গোপাল আমার মাই খাও—গস্তানি বিটির পায় ধর্‌লাম তবু কত্তারে একবার এনে 'দিলে না. গোপালের দুদ যোগান কর্যে দয়ে আবার যেতেন; 'বিটির সঙ্গে যে ভাব, চিটি লিখ্‌লিই যমরাজ ছেড়ে দিত (আপনার হস্তের রজ্জু দেখিয়া) বিধবা হয়্যে হাতে গহনা রাখিলে পতির গতি হয় না—চীৎকার কর্যে কাঁদিতে লাগ্‌লাম তবু আমারে শাকা পর্‌য়্যে দিলে—প্রদীপে পুড়ুয়ে ফেলিচি তবু আছে (দন্ত দ্বারা হস্তের রজ্জু ছেদন) বিধবা হয়্যে গহনা পরা সাজেও না সয়ও না, হাতে ফোস্‌কা হয়েচে (রোদন) আমার শাকাপরা যে ঘুচয়েচে তার হাতের শাকা যেন তেরাত্রের মধ্যে নাবে (মাটিতে অঙ্গুলি মট্‌কায়ন) আপনিই বিছানা করি (মনে২ শয্যাপাতন) মাজুরটো কাচা হয় নাই (হস্ত বাড়াইয়া) বালিস্‌টে নাগাল পাই নে—কাঁতাখানা ময়লা হয়েচে, (হস্ত দিয়া ঘরের মেজে ঝাড়ন) বাবারে শোয়াই (আস্তে২ নবীনের মৃত শরীর ভূমিতে রাখিয়া) মার কাছে তোমার ভয় কি বাবা, সচ্চন্দে শুয়ে থাক, থুথ্‌কুড়ি দিয়ে যাই (বুকে থুথু দেওন) বিবি বিটি আজ যদি আসে আমি তার গলা টিপে মেরে ফেল্‌বো—বাছারে ছোক ছাড়া কর্‌বো না আমি গণ্ডি দিয়ে যাই (অঙ্গুলি দ্বারা নবীনের মৃত শরীর বেড়ে ঘরের মেজেয় দাগ দিতে২ মন্ত্রপঠন)।

সাপের ফেনা বাঘের নাক।
ধুনোর আগুন চরোক্ পাক॥
সাত সতীনের সাদা চুল।
ভাঁটির পাতা ধুতরো ফুল।
নীলের বিচি মরিচ পোড়া।
মড়ার মাথা মাদার গোড়া॥
হন্নে কুকুর চোরের চণ্ডী।
যমের দাঁতে এই গণ্ডী॥

সরলতার প্রবেশ

সর। এঁরা সব কোথায় গেলেন—আহা! মৃত শরীর বেষ্টন করিয়া ঘুরিতেছেন—বোধ করি প্রাণকান্ত পথশ্রান্তে নিতান্ত ক্লান্তবশতঃ ভূমিতে পতিত হইয়া শোকদুঃখবিনাশিনী নিদ্রা দেবীর শরণাপন্ন হইয়াছেন। নিদ্রে! তোমার কি লোকাতীত মহিমা! তুমি বিধবাকে সধবা কর, বিদেশীকে দেশে আন, তোমার স্পর্শে কারাবাসীদের শৃঙ্খল ছেদ হয়, তুমি রোগীর ধন্বন্তরি, তোমার রাজ্যে বর্ণভেদে ভিন্নতা নাই, তোমার রাজনিয়ম জাতিভেদে ভিন্ন হয় না; তুমি আমার প্রাণকান্তকে তোমার নিরপেক্ষ রাজ্যের প্রজা করিয়াছ নচেৎ তাঁহার নিকট হইতে পাগলিনী জননী মৃত পুত্রকে কিরূপে আনিলেন। জীবিতনাথ পিতা ভ্রাতা বিরহে নিতান্ত অধীর হইয়াছেন। পূর্ণিমার শশধর যেমন কৃষ্ণপক্ষে ক্রমে২ হ্রাসপ্রাপ্ত হয়, জীবিতনাথের মুখলাবণ্য সেইরূপ দিন দিন মলিন হইয়া একেবারে দূর হইয়াছে। মা গো, তুমি কখন্ উঠিয়া আসিয়াছ? আমি আহার নিদ্রা পরিত্যাগ করিয়া সতত তোমার সেবায় রত আছি, আমি কি এত অচৈতন্য হয়্যে পড়েছিলাম? তোমাকে সুস্থ করিবার জন্যে আমি তোমার পতিকে যমরাজার বাড়ী হইতে আনিয়া দিব স্বীকার করিয়াছি, তুমি কিঞ্চিৎ স্থির রহিয়াছিলে। এই ঘোর রজনী, সৃষ্টিসংহারে প্রবৃত্ত প্রলয়কালের ভীষণ অন্ধতামসে অবনী আবৃত; আকাশমণ্ডল ঘনতর-ঘনঘটায় আচ্ছন্ন; বহ্নিবাণের ন্যায় ক্ষণে২ ক্ষণপ্রভা প্রকাশিত; প্রাণিমাত্রেই কালনিদ্রানুরূপ নিদ্রায় অভিভূত; সকলি নীরব; শব্দের মধ্যে অরণ্যাভ্যন্তরে অন্ধকারাকুল শৃগালকুলের কোলাহল এবং তস্করনিকরের অমঙ্গলকর কুক্কুরগণের ভীষণ শব্দ; এমন ভয়াবহ নিশীথ সময়ে জননি, তুমি কিরূপে একাকিনী বহির্দ্বারে গমন করিয়া মৃত পুত্রকে আনয়ন করিলে?

মৃত শরীরের নিকট গমন

সাবি। আমি গণ্ডি দিইচি গণ্ডির ভেতর এলি।

সর। আহা! এমত দেশবিজয়ী জীবনাধিক সহোদরবিচ্ছেদে প্রাণনাথের প্রাণ থাকিবে না। (ক্রন্দন)

সাবি। তুই আমার ছেলে দেখে হিংসে কচ্চিস, ও সর্ব্বনাশি, রাঁড়ি আঁটকুড়ির মেয়ে, তোর ভাতার মরে—বার্ হ, এখান থেকে বার্ হ, লইলে এখনি তোর গলায় পা দিয়ে জিব টেনে বার্ কর্‌বো।

সর। আহা! আমার শ্বশুর শাশুড়ীর এমন সুবর্ণ-ষড়ান্ন জলের মধ্যে গেল!

সাবি। তুই আমার ছেলের দিকে চাস্ নে, তোরে বারণ কচ্চি—ভাতারখাগি। তোর মরণ ঘুনয়্যে এয়েচে দেখচি।

কিঞ্চিৎ অগ্রে গমন

সর। আহা! কৃতান্তের করাল কর কি নিষ্ঠুর! আমার সরল শাশুড়ীর মনে তুমি এমন দুঃখ দিলে, হা যম!

সাবি। আবার ডাক্‌চিস্, আবার ডাক্‌চিস্ (দুই হস্তে সরলতার গলা টিপে ধরিয়া ভূমিতে ফেলিয়া) পাজি বিটি, যমসোহাগি, এই তোরে মেরে ফেলি। (গলায় পা দিয়া দণ্ডায়মান) আমার কত্তারে খেয়েচ, আবার আমার দুদের বাছাকে খাবার জন্যে তোমার উপপতিকে ডাক্‌চো—মর্ মর্ মর্ মর্ (গলার উপর নৃত্য)।

সর। গ্যা—অ্যা, অ্যা, অ্যা।

সরলতার মৃত্যু

বিন্দুমাধবের প্রবেশ

বিন্দু। এই যে এখানে পড়িয়া রহিয়াছেন—ও মা, ও কি আমার সরলতাকে মেরে ফেলিলে জননি (সরলতার মস্তক হস্তে লইয়া) আমার প্রাণের সরলা যে এ পাপ পৃথিবী পরিত্যাগ করিয়াছেন। (রোদনান্তর সরলতার মুখচুম্বন)

সাবি। কামড়ে মেরে ফেল্ নচ্ছার বিটিকে—আমার কচি ছেলে খাবার জন্যে যমকে ডাক্‌ছেল, আমি তাই গলায় পা দিয়ে মেরে ফেলেচি।

বিন্দু। হে মাতঃ, জননী যেমন যামিনীযোগে অঙ্গচালনা দ্বারা স্তনপানাসক্ত বক্ষঃস্থলস্থ দুগ্ধপোষ্য শিশুকে বধ করিয়া নিদ্রাভঙ্গে বিলাপে অধীরা হইয়া আত্মঘাত বিধান করে, আপনার যদি এক্ষণে শোকদুঃখবিস্মারিকা ক্ষিপ্ততার অপগম হয় তবে আপনিও আপনার জীবনাধিক সরলতা-বধজনিত মনস্তাপে

প্রাণত্যাগ করেন। মা তোমার জ্ঞানদীপের কি আর উন্মেষ হইবে না—আপনার জ্ঞান সঞ্চার আর না হওয়াই ভাল। আহা, মৃতপতিপুত্রা নারীর ক্ষিপ্রতা কি সুখপ্রদ! মনোমৃগ ক্ষিপ্রতা-প্রস্তরপ্রাচীরে বেষ্টিত, শোকশার্দ্দূল আক্রমণ করিতে অক্ষম। মা আমি তোমার বিন্দুমাধব।

সাবি। কি, কি বলো?

বিন্দু। মা, আমি যে আর জীবন রাখিতে পারি নে—জননি পিতার উদ্বন্ধনে এবং সহোদরের মৃত্যুতে আপনি পাগল হইয়া আমার সরলাকে বধ করিয়া আমার ক্ষত হৃদয়ে লবণ প্রদান করিলেন।

সাবি। কি? নবীন আমার নেই, নবীন আমার নেই?—মরি মরি বাবা আমার, সোনার বিন্দুমাধব আমার, আমি তোমার সরলতাকে বধ করিয়াছি— ছোট বউমাকে আমি পাগল হয়্যে মেরে ফেলেচি, (সরলতার মৃত শরীর অঙ্কে ধারণ করিয়া আলিঙ্গন) আহা! হা! আমি পতিপুত্রবিহীন হয়্যেও জীবিত থাকিতে পারিতাম, কিন্তু তোমাকে স্বহস্তে বধ কর্য়ে আমার বুক ফেটে গেল— হো, ও, মা। (সরলতাকে আলিঙ্গনপূর্ব্বক ভূতলে পতনানন্তর মৃত্যু)

বিন্দু। (সাবিত্রীর গাত্রে হস্ত দিয়া) যাহা বলিলাম তাহাই ঘটিল! মাতার জ্ঞানসঞ্চারে প্রাণনাশ হইল! কি বিড়ম্বনা! জননী আর ক্রোড়ে লয়্যে মুখচুম্বন করিবেন না! মা, আমার মা বলা কি শেষ হইল! (রোদন) জন্মের মত জননীর চরণধূলি মস্তকে দি! (চরণের ধূলি মস্তকে দেওন) জন্মের মত জননীর চরণরেণু ভোজন করিয়া মানবদেহ পবিত্র করি।

চরণের ধূলি ভক্ষণ

সৈরিন্ধ্রীর প্রবেশ

সৈরি। ঠাকুরপো, আমি সহমরণে যাই, আমারে বাধা দিও না! সরলতার কাছে বিপিন আমার পরম সুখে থাকবে—এ কি! এ কি! শাশুড়ী বয়ে এরূপ পড়ে কেন!

বিন্দু। বড় বউ, মাতাঠাকুরুণী সরলতাকে বধ করিয়াছেন, তৎপরে সহসা জ্ঞানসঞ্চার হওয়াতে, আপনিও সাতিশয় শোকসন্তপ্ত হইয়া প্রাণত্যাগ করিয়াছেন!

সৈরি। এখন? কেমন কর্য়ে? কি সর্ব্বনাশ! কি হলো! কি হলো! আহা! আহা! ও দিদি আমার যে বড় সাধের চুলের দড়ি, তুমি যে আজো খোঁপায় দেউ নি! আহা! আহা! আর তুমি দিদি বল্যে ডাকবে না (রোদন) ঠাকুরুণ, তোমার

রামের কাছে তুমি গেলে আমায় যেতে দিলে না। ও মা তোমায় পেয়ে আমি মায়ের কথা যে একদিনও মনে করি নি।

আদুরীর প্রবেশ

আদু। বিপিন ডরয়্যে উটেচে, বড় হালদার্ণি তুমি শীগ্‌গির এস!

সৈরি। তুই সেইখান হতে ডাক্‌তে পারিস্ নি, একা রেখে এইচিস্।

আদুরীর সহিত বেগে প্রস্থান

বিন্দু। বিপিন আমার বিপদ্‌সাগরে ধ্রুবনক্ষত্র! (দীর্ঘনিশ্বাস পরিত্যাগ করিয়া) বিনশ্বর অবনীমণ্ডলে মাবনলীলা, প্রবলপ্রবাহসমাকুলা গভীর স্রোতস্বতীর অত্যুচ্চকূলতুল্য ক্ষণভঙ্গুর। তটের কি অপূর্ব্ব শোভা! লোচনানন্দপ্রদ নবীন দূর্ব্বাদলাবৃত ক্ষেত্র, অভিনব পল্লবসুশোভিত মহীরুহ, কোথাও সন্তোষসঙ্কুলিত ধীবরের পর্ণকুটীর বিরাজমান, কোথাও নবদূর্ব্বাদললোলুপা সবৎসা ধেনু আহারে বিমুগ্ধা; আহা! তথায় ভ্রমণ করিলে বিহঙ্গমদলের সুললিত ললিত তানে এবং প্রস্ফুটিতবনপ্রসূনসৌরভামোদিত মন্দ২ গন্ধবহে পূর্ণানন্দ আনন্দময়ের চিন্তায় চিত্ত অবগাহন করে। সহসা ক্ষেত্রোপরি রেখার স্বরূপ চিড়্দর্শন, অচিরাৎ শোভা সহ কূল ভগ্ন গভীর নীরে নিমগ্ন। কি পরিতাপ। স্বরপুরনিবাসী বসুকুল নীলকীর্ত্তিনাশায় বিলুপ্ত হইল—আহা! নীলের কি করাল কর!

নীলকর বিষধর বিষপোরা মুখ।
অনল শিখায় ফেলে দিল যত সুখ॥
অবিচারে কারাগারে পিতার নিধন।
নীলক্ষেত্রে জ্যেষ্ঠ ভ্রাতা হলেন পতন॥
পতিপুত্রশোকে মাতা হয়ে পাগলিনী।
স্বহস্তে করেন বধ সরলা কামিনী॥
আমার বিলাপে মার জ্ঞানের সঞ্চার।
একেবারে উথলিল দুঃখ পারাবার॥
শোকশূলে মাতা হলে বিষ বিড়ম্বনা।
তখনি মলেন মাতা কে শোনে সান্ত্বনা॥
কোথা পিতা কোথা পিতা ডাকি আনিবার।
হাস্যমুখে আলিঙ্গন কর একবার॥
জননী জননী বলে চারি দিকে চাই।
আনন্দময়ীর মূর্ত্তি দেখিতে না পাই॥

মা বলে ডাকিলে মাতা অমনি আসিয়ে।
বাছা বলে কাছে লন মুখ মুছাইয়ে॥
অপার জননীস্নেহ কে জানে মহিমা।
রণে বনে ভীতমনে বলি মা, মা, মা, মা॥
সুখাবহ সহোদর জীবনের ভাই।
পৃথিবীতে হেন বন্ধু আর দুটি নাই॥
নয়ন মেলিয়া কাদা দেখ একবার।
বাড়ী আসিয়াছে বিন্দুমাধব তোমার॥
আহা! আহা! মরি মরি বুক ফেটে যায়।
প্রাণের সরলা মম লুকালো কোথায়॥
রূপবতী গুণবতী পতিপরায়ণা।
মরালগমনা কান্তা কুরঙ্গনয়না॥
সহাস বদনে সতী সুমধুর স্বরে।
বেতাল করিতে পাঠ মম করে ধরে॥
অমৃত পঠনে মন হতো বিমোহিত।
বিজন বিপিনে বনবিহঙ্গ সঙ্গীত॥
সরলা সরোজকান্তি কিবা মনোহর।
আলো কর্য়ে ছিল মম দেহ সরোবর॥
কে হরিল সরোরুহ হইয়া নির্দ্দয়।
শোভাহীন সরোবব অন্ধকারময়॥
হেরি সব শবময় শ্মশান সংসার।
পিতা মাতা ভ্রাতা দারা মরেছে আমার॥

আহা! এরা সব দাদার মৃতদেহ অন্বেষণ করিতে কোথায় গমন করিল—তাহারা আইলে জাহ্নবীযাত্রার আয়োজন করা যায়—আহা! পুরুষসিংহ নবীনমাধবের জীবননাটকের শেষ অঙ্ক কি ভয়ঙ্কর!

সাবিত্রীর চরণ ধরিয়া উপবেশন

যবনিকা পতন

সমাপ্তমিদং নীলদর্পণং নাম নাটকং।

নীলদর্পণের সংলাপে ব্যবহৃত আঞ্চলিক কথ্যভাষার আভিধানিকরূপ। বন্ধনীর মধ্যে পৃষ্ঠা-সংখ্যা উল্লিখিত।

অক্ত (২৪) — রক্ত
অনতেরা (২৫) — হদিস, অন্ত, তথ্য
অমাবস্যা (৬২) — আমাশয়
অরপুরুষ (২৬) -- অপরূপ
আজাদের (১৮) — রাজাদের
আষ্ট্র (৬১) — রাষ্ট্র
অ্যাকান (২৮) — এখন
ইনসুল (২৫) — আইননির্দিষ্ট ধারামতে আটক
এগোনের (২৫) — পূর্ব্বেকার
এড়ো (৪৮) — আড়াআড়ি বিস্তৃত
এমান (৪৬) — ইমান - ধর্ম্মবিশ্বাস
কসবি (২০) — বেশ্যা
কানসারন (২৭) — কনসার্ন (Concern)
কামরাঙ্গা (২১) — "কামরা, পর্ত্তুগীজ camara হইতে"
কারতিকী (১০) -- কারাকিত (১৪) কারকীত (৬৫) — চাষকর্ম্ম
কুড়ো (৯) — বিঘা
কোমেট (২৫) — কমিটী (Committee)
গত্তে (৯) — কত্তে, করিতে, নীল করিতে—to work
গস্তানি (২১) — কুলটা
গাঁটি (৬৮) — গাঁটে, ট্যাকে
গাঁতা (২৭) — মিলিত কাজ
গাঁতি (৭, ১২) — জমিদারের অধীন জমা জমি, যুক্ত ভূ-সম্পত্তি
গারনাল (২৫) — গভর্ণর
গোঁট-বেঁদে (২৫) — দল বাঁধিয়া
গোড়া (১০) — গুওটা - গু-খেকোর ব্যাটা
গৌণপরা (৬৫) — গাউন পরা
ঘোঁটা মাত্তি (২৫) — তোলপাড় করিতে
ঘোল বলাইয়াছে (৩৭) — জব্দ করিয়াছে
চাবালি (২৪, ৪৭) — চোয়াল
চুনুরি (৭৬) — চুমকি দেওয়া
চুলগল্লাডা (৩০) — চুলগোছাটা
ছুট (১৬) — চুল বাঁধিবার দড়ি
জামা (২৫) — জামাই
জোরার (৪৭) — যমের
ঝক্কোতে (২৬) — ঝটিতি, শীঘ্র
ঝমকে (২১) — চমকে
ঝরকা (২৭) — জানলা
ঝাপটা (২০) — চুলে পাতা কাটা

ঝোজানি (২৪) — ঝুজিয়ে
টিকিরি (২৪, ৫৩) — ঠিকা মজুর
ডেড়লি কমিসন (৬৩) — Indigo Commission
তবাদি (২৪) — পর্য্যন্ত
তাইনে (৫৪) — হারে, প্রত্যেকে
তেতো (২৬) — তপ্ত
তেরোনাল (২২) — তরবারধারী
দই (৪৬) — দোহাই
দাসদিগিতে (৪৩) — দাসদীঘিতে
দৈনিক সংবাদপত্র সম্পাদকদ্বয় (২) — নীলকরদের সমর্থনকারী 'ইংলিশম্যান' ও 'হরকরা'-সম্পাদকদ্বয়।
দ্বটি, দ্বটো (৩১) — দুটি, দুটো
নচা (২৬) — রচা
নচতি (২৬) — রচতে
নটতো (২৫) — রটতো, রটিত
নড়ুই (২৫) — লড়াই
নাকে (২৫) — রাখে
নাজি (২৮) — বাজি
নাঙ্গা পাকড়ি (২২) — রাঙা পাকড়ি, পুলিস
নাড় (১৮) — রাঁড়, বিধবা
নাতি (৪৭) — রাতি, রাত্রি
নিচু (২৫) — ছোট, নেহাৎ
নেটেলা (২১) — লেঠেল, লাঠিয়াল
নেয়েত (৪৭) — রায়ত
নোনা ফেনা (১০) — নোনা জল লাগিয়া নষ্ট অনুর্ব্বর জমি
ন্যাকাৎ (৬১) — মতন
পত্তি (১৯) — প্রতি
পিল (২২) — আপীল
পুটঠাকুর (৩৪) — পুরুতঠাকুর
পেটপোড়া খেবয়েচে (২২) — সন্তাননিরোধ করিবার ঔষধ খাওয়াইয়াছে
পোঁচা (৪৭) — করতল
ফ্যাবা (২১) — চীৎকার
বটনেকা (৩৮) — বৈঠনেকা, বসবার
বাউ (১৮) — বাউটি
বাউরা (২৮) — পাগল
বার (১৯) — সময়
বিদে কাটি (১০) — ক্ষেত্রের তৃণ মারিবার লৌহকণ্টকযুক্ত কাষ্ঠ
বুনো (৪৭) — বুনো-জাতীয় কুলি-সম্প্রদায়

বেওরাওয়ারি (৫১) — জোর করিয়া
বেছাপ্পর (৪৭) — আশ্রয়হীন
বেপালটে (৪৭) — বিপদে
বেল (২৮, ৪৫) — বেলা
ভাবরা (২৯) — খাপরা
ভেমো (৬২) — বোকা
ভোগোল (৬২) — যে ভোগায়
ভ্যালা (৩৪) — কাপড়ে চিহ্ন দিবার রঙ
মজুকুর (৫১) — লিখিত বিবরণ
মাইন্দার (১৪) — মাহিনাদার, চাকর
মাচেরটক (২২) — ম্যাজিষ্ট্রেট
মাটোব্বর (৩৭) — মাতোব্বর, বিশ্বাসযোগ্য
মাদ্দা (৬৭) — মকদ্দমা
মান্নি (২৬) — মারানী
মার্গ (২৬) — মার্ক, দাগ
মোজা (৬৫) — মৌজা
ম্যাদ (২২) — মেয়াদ
রামকান্ত (২৮) — শ্যামচাঁদ দ্রষ্টব্য
রোকা (৪১) — পত্র
র‍্যাংরাজ (৬১) — ইংরাজ
লৌ (২৪) — লহু, রক্ত
শ্যামচাঁদ (২, ১৪, ২৪) — চর্ম্মনির্ম্মিত চাবুক
সমে (২৪) — সময়ে
সাঁকতি (৭৬) — শাঁক
সাড়ে সইয়ে (৬৪) — সাড়ে সওয়া
সাতান (৩৮) — সাতোয়ান, যে যথানিয়মে খাজনা দিতে সমর্থ
সারাক্ষুণ্ডি (৬১) — সারাক্ষণটি
সেদের (৪৭) — সাধুর
সেবের (২৫) — সাহেবের
সেমনতোনের (২৪) — সীমন্তোন্নয়ন - দশ সংস্কারের অন্যতম
সোদা (২৮) — সিধে
সোমোজ কত্তি (২৬) — সমঝাইতে, বুঝিতে
হদ্দ (১৩) — বড়জোর
হাতের ন ক্ষয় যাক (১৯) — হাতেব লৌহ হাতেই ক্ষয়প্রাপ্ত হউক
হিরভিতি (২৬) — কারচুপি
হের (২৪) — ইহার
হ্যাংনামা (২৫) — হাঙ্গামা
হ্যাল মেরেছে (২৫) — হ্যালো (Hallo) বলিয়াছে।

দ্বিতীয় ভাগ

NIL DURPAN

Drama translated from the Bengali original



Michael M. S. Dutt

শিল্পী—

দ্বাদশবর্ষীয় ভাস্কর মিত্র

NIL DURPAN,

OR

THE INDIGO PLANTING MIRROR,

A Drama

TRANSLATED FROM THE BENGALI

BY

A Native

CALCUTTA

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INTRODUCTION

The original Bengali of this Drama—the NIL DURPAN, or INDIGO PLANTING MIRROR—having excited considerable interest, a wish was expressed by various Europeans to see a translation of it. This has been made by a Native; both the original and translation are *bona fide* Native productions and depict the Indigo Planting System as viewed by Natives at large.

The Drama is the favourite mode with the Hindus for describing certain states of society, manners, customs. Since the days of Sir W Jones, by scholars at Paris, St. Petersburgh, and London, the Sanskrit Drama has, in the point of view, been highly appreciated The Bengali Drama imitates in this respect its Sanskrit parent The evils of Kulin Brahminism, widow marriage prohibition, quackery, fanaticism, have been depicted by it with great effect.

Nor has the system of Indigo planting escaped notice hence the origin of this work, the NIL DURPAN, which through exhibiting no marvellous or very tragic scenes, yet, in simple homely language, gives the "annals of the poor"; pleads the cause of those who are the feeble; it describes a respectable ryot, a peasant proprietor, happy with his family in the enjoyment of his land till the Indigo System compelled him to take advances, to neglect his own land, to cultivate crops which beggared him, reducing him to the condition of a serf and vagabond, the effect of this on his home; children, and relatives are pointed out in language, plain but true; it shows how arbitrary power debases the lord as well as the peasant; reference is also made to the partiality of various Magistrates in favour of Planters and to the Act of last year penally enforcing Indigo contracts.

Attention has of late years been directed by Christian Philanthropists to the condition of the ryots of Bengal, their teachers, and the oppressions which they suffer, and the conclusion arrived at is, that there is little prospect or possibility of ameliorating the mental, moral, or spiritual condition of the ryot is to be treated as a serf, or a mere squatter or day-labourer, the missionary, the school-master, even the Developer of the resources of India, will find their work like that of Sisyphus—vain and useless.

Statistics have proved that in France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Saxony, the education of the peasant, along with the security of tenure he enjoys on his small farms, has encouraged industrious, temperate, virtuous, and cleanly habits, fostered a respect for property, increased social comforts, cherished a spirit of health and active independence, improved the cultivation of the land, lessened pauperism, and has rendered the people averse to revolution, and friends of order. Even Russia is carrying out a grand scheme of serf-emancipation in this spirit.

It is the earnest wish of the write of these lines that harmony may be speedily established between the Planter and the Ryot, that mutual interests may bind the two classes together, and that the European may be in the Mofussil the protecting Ægis of the peasants, who may be able "to sit each man under his mango and tamarind tree, none daring to make him afraid."

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I PRESENT "The Indigo Planting Mirror" to the Indigo Planters' hands; now, let every one of them having observed his face, erase the freckle of the stain of selfishness from his forehead, and in its stead, place on it the sandal powder of beneficence, then shall I think my labour successful, good fortune for the helpless class of ryots, and preservation of England's honour. Oh, ye Indigo Planters! Your malevolent conduct has brought a stain upon the English Nation, which was no graced by the ever-memorable names of Sydney, Howard, Hall, and other great men. Is your desire for money so very powerful, that through the instigation of that vain wealth, you are engaged in making holes like rust in the long acquired and pure fame of the British people? Abstain now from that unjust conduct through which you are raising immense sums as your profits, and then the poor people, with their families, will be able to spend their days in case. You are now-a-days purchasing things worth a hundred rupees by expending only ten;- -and you well know what great trouble the ryots are suffering from that. Still you are not willing to make that known, being entirely given up to the acquisition of money. You say, that some amongst you give donations to schools, and also medicine in time of need—but the Planters' donations to schools are more odious than the application of the shoe for the destruction of a wilch cow, and their grants of medicine are like unto mixing the inspissated milk in the cup of poison. If the application of little turpentine after being beat by *Shamchand*,[1] be forming a dispensary then it may be said that in every factory there is a dispensary. **The Editors of two daily newspapers are filling their columns with your praises; and whatever other people may think, you never enjoy pleasure from it, since you know fully the reason of their so doing. What surprising power of attraction silver has? The detestable Judas gave the great Preacher of the Christian religion, Jesus, into the hands of odious Pilate for the sake of thirty rupees; what wonder then, if the proprietors of two newspapers, becoming ensalved by the hope of gaining one thousand rupees, throw the poor helpless of this land into the terrible grasp of your mouths,**[2] *But misery and happiness revolve like a wheel*, and that the sun of happiness is about to shed his light on the people of this kind-

hearted Queen Victoria, the mother of the people, thinking it unadvisable to suckle her children through maid-servants, has now taken them on her own lap to nourish them. The most learned, intelligent, brave, and open-hearted Lord Canning is now the Governor-General of India; Mr. Grant, who always suffers in the sufferings of his people, and is happy when they are happy, who punishes the wicked and supports the good, has taken charge of the Lieutenant-Governorship, and other persons, as Messrs, Eden, Herschel, etc , who are all well-known for their love of truth, for their great experience and strict impartiality, are continually expanding themselves lotus-like on the surface of the lake of the Civil Service Therefore, it is becoming fully evident that these great men will very soon take hold of the rod of justice in order to stop the sufferings which the ryots are enduring from the great giant Rahu, the Indigo Planter.

NIL DURPAN

OR

INDIGO PLANTING MIRROR

MEN

GOLUK CHUNDER BASU. NOBIN MADHAB, BINDHU MADHAB (*Sons of Goluk Chunder*). SADHU CHURN (*A Neighbouring Ryot*) RAY CHURN (*Sadhu's brother*) GOPI CHURN DAS (*The Dewan*) J. J WOOD, P. P. ROSE (*Indigo Planter*) THE AMIN OR LANDMEASURER A KHALASI (*A Tentpitcher*). TAIDGIR (*Native Superintendent of Indigo Cultivation*). MAGISTRATE, AMLA, ATTORNEY, DEPUTY INSPECTOR, KEEPER OF THE GAOL, DOCTOR, A COW-KEEPER, A NATIVE DOCTOR, FOUR BOYS, A LATYAL OR CLUB-MAN, AND A HERDSMAN.

WOMEN

SABITRI (*Wife of Goluk Chunder*). SOIRINDRI (*Wife of Nobin*). SARALOTA (*Wife of Bindhu Madhab*) REBOTI (*Wife of Sadhu Churn*) KHETROMANI (*Daughter of Sadhu*). ADURI (*Maid-servant of Goluk Chunder's house*) PODI MOYRANI (*A Sweetmeat Maker*)

ACT I

SCENE I

SVAROPUR—(*A Verandah attached to*) GOLUK CHUNDER'S GOLA *or Store-House.*

GOLUK CHUNDER BASU *and* SADHU CHURN *sitting.*

Sadhu Master, I told you then we cannot live any more in this country. You did not hear me however. A poor man's word bears fruit after the lapse of year

Goluk. O my child! It is easy to leave one's country? My family has been here for seven generations The lands which our fathers rented have enabled us never to acknowledge ourselves servants of others. The rice, which grows, provides food for the whole year, means of hospitality to guests, and also the expense of religious services; the mustard seed we get supplies oil for the whole year, and, besides, we can sell it for about sixty or seventy rupees. Svaropur is not a place where people are

in want. It has rice, peas, oil, molasses from its fields, vegetables in the garden, and fish from the tank; whose heart is not torn when obliged to leave such a place? And who can do that easily?

Sadhu Now it is no more a place of happiness, your garden is already gone, and your holdings are well nigh gone Ah! it is not yet three years since the Saheb took a lease of this place, and he has already ruined the whole village We cannot bear to turn our eyes in the southern direction towards the house of the heads of the villages (*Mandal*). Oh! what was it once, and what is it now? Three years ago, about sixty men used to make a daily feast in the house; there were ten ploughs, and about forty or fifty oxen; as to the court-yard, it was crowded like as at the horse races; when they used to arrange the ricks of corn it appeared, as it were, that the lotus had expanded itself on the surface of a lake bordered by sandal groves; the granary was as large as a hill; but last year the granary, not being repaired, was on the point of falling into the yard Because he was not allowed to plant Indigo in the rice-field, the wicked Saheb beat the Majo and Sajo Babus most severely, and how very difficult it was to get them out of his clutches, the ploughs and kine were sold, and at that crisis the two Mandals left the village.

Goluk. Did not the eldest Mandal go to bring his brethren back?

Sadhu They said "We would rather beg from door to door than go to live there again." The eldest Mandal is now left alone, and he has kept two ploughs which are nearly always engaged in the Indigo-fields. And even this person is making preparations for flying off Oh, Sir! I tell you also to throw aside this infatuated attachment (maya) for your native place Last time your rich went, and this time your honour will go

Goluk What honour remains to us now? The Planter has prepared his place of cultivation round about the tank, and will plant Indigo there this year. In that case, our women will be entirely excluded from the tank. And also the Saheb has said that if we do not cultivate our rice-fields with Indigo, he will make Nobin Madhab to drink the water of seven Factories (i e. to be confined in them)

Sadhu Has not the eldest Babu gone to the Factory?

Goluk Has he gone of his own will? The Pyeadah (a servant) has carried him off there.

Sahdu But our eldest Babu has very great courage. On the day the Saheb said, "If you don't hear the Amin, and don't plant the Indigo within

the ground marked off, then shall we throw your houses into the river Betroboti, and shall make you eat your rice in the factory godown," the eldest Babu replied, "As long as we shall not get the price for the fifty bighas of land sown with Indigo last year, we will not give one bigha this year for Indigo. What do we care for our house? We shall even risk (pawn) our lives."

Goluk. What could he have done, without he said that? Just see, no anxiety would have remained in our family if the fifty bighas of rice produce had been left with us. And if they give us the money for the Indigo, the greater part of our troubles will go away

NABIN MADHAB *enters*

O my son, what has been done?

Nabin. Sir, does the cobra shrink from biting the little child on the lap of its mother on account of the sorrow of the mother? I flattered him much, but he understood nothing by that. He kept to his word and said, "Give us sixty bighas of land, secured by written documents, and take 50 rupees, then we shall close the two years' account at once."

Goluk Then, if we are go give sixty bighas for the cultivations of the Indigo, we cannot engage in any other cultivation whatever Then we shall die without rice crops

Nobin. I said, "Saheb, as you engage all our men, our ploughs, and our kine, everything in the Indigo field, only give us every year through, our food. We don't want hire." On which, he with a laugh said, "you surely don't eat Yaban's[3] rice."

Sahdu. Those whose only pay is a bellyful of food are, I think, happier than we are.

Goluk. We have nearly abandoned all the ploughs, till we have to cultivate Indigo. We have no chance in a dispute with the Sahebs. They bind and beat us, it is for us to suffer. We are consequently obliged to work.

Nobin. I shall do as you order. Sir; but my design is for once to bring an action into Court.

ADURI *enters*

Aduri. Our Mistress is making noise within. The day is far advanced; will you not go to bathe, and take your food? The boiled rice is very near become dry.

Sadhu. (*Standing up*) Sir. decide something about this, or I shall

die. If we give the labour of one-and-a-half of our ploughs for the cultivation of nine bighas of Indigo field, our boiling pots of rice will go empty. Now I am going away. Sir, farewell, our eldest Babu.

[SADHU *goes away*]

Goluk We don't think that God will any more allow to bathe and to take food in this land. Now, my son, go and bathe.

[*All go away*]

SCENE II

The house of SADHU CHURN

RAY CHURN *enters with his plough*

Ray (*Laying down his plough*) The stupid Amin is a tiger The violence with which he came upon me! Oh my God! I thought that he was coming to devour me That villain did not hear a single word and with force he marked off the ground If they take five bighas of land of Sanpoltola what will my family eat? First, we will shed tears before them! if they don't let us alone as a matter of course, we shall leave the country.

KHETROMANI *enters*

If my brother come home?

Khetro. Father is gone to the house of the Babus and is coming very soon Will you not go to call my aunt? What were you talking about?

Ray I am talking of nothing Now, bring me a little water, my stomach is on the point of bursting from thirst I told my brother-in-law[4] so much, but he did not hear me

SADHU *enters and* KHETROMANI *goes away*

Sadhu. Ray, why did you come so early?

Ray O my brother, the vile Amin has marked off the piece of ground in Sanpoltola. What shall we eat, and how shall I pass the year? Ah, our land was bright as the golden champa.[5] By the produce of only one corner of the field, we satisfied the mahajans What shall we eat now, and what shall our children take? This large family may die without food. Every morning two recas (nearly 5 lbs) of rice are necessary. What shall we eat then? Oh, my ill-fortune! (burnt forehead), What has the Indigo of this white-man done?

Sadhu We are living in the hope of cultivating these bighas of land and now, if these are gone, then what use is there of remaining here any

more? And the one or two bighas which are become-saltish yield no produce. Again, the ploughs are to remain in the Indigo-field, and what can we do? Don't weep now; tomorrow we shall sell off the ploughs and cows, leave this village and go and live in the zemindary of Babu Basanta.

KHETROMANI *and* REBOTI *enter with water*

Now, drink the water, drink the water; what do you fear? He, who has given life, will provide also food. Now, what did you say to the Amin?

Ray. What could I say? He began to mark off the ground, on which it seemed as if he began to thrust burnt sticks into my breast. I entreated holding him by his feet, and wanted to give him money; but he heard nothing. He said, "Go to your eldest Babu, go to your father." When I returned, I only punished him with saying, "I shall bring this before the Court."

(*Seeing the Amin at a distance*)

Just see, that villain (*Shala*) is coming; he has brought servants with him, and will take us to the Factory.

The AMIN *and the two servants enter*

Amin. Bind the hands of this villain.

(RAY CHURN is bound by the two servants)

Reboti. Oh! what is this? Why do they bind him? What ruin? What ruin? (*To Sadhu*) Why do you stand looking on? Go to the house of the Babus, and call the eldest Babu here.

Amin. (*To Sadhu*) Where shalt thou go now? You are also to go with me. To take advances is not the business of Ray. We shall have much to bear with if we are to make signature by cross marks. And because you know how to read and to write, therefore you must go and make the signatures in the Factory Account-Book.

Sadhu. Sir, do you call this giving advances for Indigo; would it not be better to call it the cramming down Indigo?[6] Oh my ill-fortune, you are still with me! That very blow, through fear of which I fled, I have to bar again. This land was as the kingdom of Rama before Indigo was established, but the ignorant fool is become a beggar, and famine has come upon the land.

Amin. (*To himself, observing Khetromani*) This young woman is

not bad-looking; if our younger Saheb can get her, he will with his whole heart, take her. But while I was unable to succeed in getting a *peshkar's* (observer's) post by giving him my own sister, what can I expect from getting him this woman; but still she is very beautiful; I will try.

Reboti. Khetro, go into the room.

[KHETROMANI *goes away*]

Amin. Now, Sadhu, if you want to come in a proper manner, come with me to the Factory.

[*Going forward*]

Reboti. Oh Amin! have you no wife nor children? Have you kept only the plough and this beating (*marpit*)? Did he not want to drink a little water? By this time he ought to take a second meal. How can he then, without taking any food, go to the Saheb's house which is at such a distance. I ask for the Saheb's grace; just let him have some food; and then take him away. Oh! he is so very much troubled for his wife and his children. Oh! he is shedding tears, his face is become dry. What are you doing? To what a burnt-up land am I come? Destruction has come upon me both in life and money. Oh! Oh! Oh! I am gone both in life and money.

(*Weeps*)

Amin. Oh, stupid woman! Now stop your grunting. If you want to give water, bring it soon; else I shall take him away.

[RAY CHURN *drinks water;*
exit all]

FIRST ACT—THIRD SCENE.

The Factory of BEGUNBARI

THE VERANDAH OF THE LARGE BUNGALOW.

Enter J. J. WOOD *and* GOPI CHURN DAS, *the Dewan.*

Gopi. What fault have I done, my Lord? You are observing me day by day. I begin to move about early in the morning and return home at three o'clock in the afternoon. Again, immediately after taking dinner, I sit down to look over papers about Indigo advances; and that takes my time to twelve and sometimes to one o'clock in the night.

Wood. You, rascal, are very inexperienced. There are no advances made in Svaropur, Shamanagar, and Santighata villages. You will never learn without Shamchand (*the leather strap*).

Gopi. My Lord, I am your servant. It is through favour only that you have raised me from the *peshkari* business to the Dewani. You are me only Lord, you can either kill me or can cut me in pieces. Certain powerful enemies have arises against this Factory, and without their punishment, there is no cultivation of Indigo.

Wood. How can I punish without knowing them? A for money, horses, latyals (club-men), I have a sufficiency; can they not be punished by these? The former Dewan made known to me about those enemies. You do not. I have scourged those wicked people, taken away their kine, and kept their wives in confinement which is a very severe punishment for them. You are a very great fool; you know nothing at all. The business of the Dewan is not that of the Kayt caste, I shall drive you off, and give the business to a Keaot.

Gopi. My Lord, although I am by caste a Kayastha, I do work like a Keaot (*a shoe-maker*). The service I have rendered in stopping the rice cultivation and making the Indigo to grow in the field of the Mollahs, and also to take (*Lakhraj*) his rent-free lands of seven generation from Goluk Chunder Bose, and to take away the iron crow*[7] from the Government; the work I have done for these, I can dare say, can never be done by a Keaot (*a shoe-maker*). It is my ill-fortune only (*evil-forehead*) that I don't get the least praise for doing so much.

Wood. That fool, Nobin Madhab, wants the whole account settled. I shall not give him a single cowrie. That fellow is very well-versed in the affairs of the Court; but I shall see, how that braggart takes the advances from me.

Gopi. Sir, he is one of the principal enemies of this Factory. The burning down of Polaspore would never have been proved, had Nobin no concern in the matter. That fool himself prepared the draft of the petition; and it was through his advice and intrigues that the Attorney so turned the mind of the Judge. Again, it was through his intrigues that our former Dewan was confined for two years. I forbade him, saying, "Babu Nobin, don't act against our Saheb; and especially as he has not burnt your house." To which he replied, "I have enlisted myself in order to save the poor ryots. I shall think myself highly rewarded, if I can preserve once poor ryot from the tortures of the cruel Indigo Planters; and throwing this Dewan into prison, I shall have compensation for my garden." That braggart is become like a Christian Missionary; and I cannot say what preparation he is making this time.

Wood. You are afraid. Did I not tell you at first, you are very ignorant? No work is to be done through you.

Gopi. Saheb, what signs of fear hast thou seen in me? When I have entered on this Indigo profession, I have thrown off all fear, shame, and honour; and the destroying of cows, of Brahmans, of women, and the burning down of houses are become my ornaments, and I now lie down in bed keeping the jail as my pillow (*thinking of it*).

Wood. I do not want words, but work.

SADHU, RAY, *the* AMIN, *and the servants enter making salams.*

Why are the wicked fool's hands bound with cords?

Gopi. My lord, this Sadhu Churn is a head ryot, but through enticement of Nobin Bose he has been led to engage in the destruction of Indigo.

Sadhu. My Lord, I do nothing unjust against your Indigo, nor am I doing now, neither have I power to do anything wrong; willingly or unwillingly. I have prepared the Indigo, and also I am ready to make it this time. But then, every thing has its probability and improbability; if you want to make powder of eight inches thickness to enter a pipe half-an-inch thick, will it not burst? I am a poor ryot, I keep only one and half ploughs, have only twenty bighas of land for cultivation; and now, if I am to give nine bighas out of that for Indigo, that must occasion my death, but my Lord, what is that to you, it is only my death.

Gopi. The Saheb fears least you keep him confined in the godown of your eldest Babu.

Sadhu. Now, Sir Dewanji, what you say is striking a corpse (*useless labour*). What mite am I that I shall imprison the Saheb, the mighty and glorious?

Gopi. Sadhu, no away with your high-flown language; it does no sound well on the tongue of a peasant; it is like a sweeper's broom touching the body.

Wood. Now the rascal is become very wise.

Amin. That fool explains the laws and magistrate's orders to the common people, and thus raises confusion. His brother draws the ploughshare, and he uses the high word protapshali "glorious".

Gopi. The child of the preparer of cow-dung balls is become a Court Naeb (*deputy*). My Lord, the establishment of schools in villages has increased the violence of the ryots.

Wood. I shall write to our Indigo Planters' Association to make a

petition to the Government for stopping the schools in villages; we shall fight to secure stopping the schools.

Amin. That fool wants to bring the case into Court.

Wood. (*To Sadhu*) You are very wicked. You have twenty bighas, of which, if you employ nine bighas for Indigo, why can't you cultivate the other nine bighas for rice?

Gopi. My Lord, the debt which is credited to him can be made use of by bringing the whole twenty bighas within our own power.

Sadhu. (*To himself*) O, oh! The witness for the spirit-seller is the drunkard! (*Openly*) If the nine bighas, which are marked off for the cultivation of the Indigo were worked by the plough and kine of the Factory, then can I use the other nine bighas for rice. The work which is to be done in the ricefield is only a fourth of that which is necessary in the Indigo-field, consequently if I am to remain engaged in these nine bighas, the remaining eleven bighas will be without cultivation.

Wood. You, dolt, are very wicked, you scoundrel (*haramjada*); you must take the money in advance; you must cultivate the land; you are a real scoundrel (*kicks him*). You shall leave off every thing, when you meet with Shamchand (*takes Shamchand from the wall*).

Sadhu. My Lord, the hand is only blackened by killing a fly, i.e. your beating me only injuries you. I am too mean. We—

Ray. (*Angrily*) O my brother, you had better stop; let them take what they can; our very stomach is on the point of falling down from hunger. The whole day is passed, we have not yet been able either to bathe or to take our food.

Amin. O rascal, where is your Court now? (*Twists his ears*)

Ray. (*with violent panting*) I now die! My mother! My mother!

Wood. Beat that "bloody nigger" (*beats with Shamchand, the leather strap*).

Enter NOBIN MADHAB

Ray. O thou Babu, I am dying! Give me some water. I am just dead!

Nobin. Saheb they have not bathed, neither have they taken the least food. The members of their family have not yet washed their faces. If you thus destroy your ryots by flogging them, who will prepare your Indigo? This Sadhu Churn prepared the produce of about four bighas last year with the greatest trouble possible; and if with such severe beatings you make such cruel advances to them, that is only your loss. For this

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day given them leave, and tomorrow I myself shall bring them with me, and do as thou do'st bid me.

Wood. Attend do your own business. What concern have you with another's affairs. Sadhu, give your opinion quickly, and it is my dinner time.

Sadhu. What is the use of waiting for my opinion? You have already marked off the four bighas of the most productive land; and the Amin has, to-day, marked off the remaining part. The land is marked without my consent, the Indigo shall be prepared in the same way; and I also agree to prepare it without taking any advances.

Wood. Do you say my advances are all fictitious you cursed wretch, bastard and heretic, (*beats him*).

Nobin. (*Covers with his hands the back of Sadhu*) My Lord, this poor man has many to support in his family. Owing to the beating he has got, I think, he will be confined in bed for a month. Oh! What pains his family is suffering! Sir, you have also your family. Now, what sorrow would affect the mind of your wife if you were taken prisoner at your dinner-time?

Wood. Be silent thou fool, braggart, low fellow, cow-eater. Don't think that the Magistrate is like that one of Amaranagara, that you can, for every word, lay complains before him, and imprison the men of the Factory. The Magistrate of Indrabad is as death to you. You rascal, you must first give me a hand-note to state you have received the advance for sixty bighas of land, or else I shall not let you go this day. I shall break your head with this Shamchand, you stupid. It is owing to your not taking advances, that I have not been able to force advances on ten other villages.

Nobin. (*with heavy sighs*) O my mother Earth! Separate yourself that I may enter into you. In my life I never suffered such an insult. O, oh!

Gopi. Babu Nobin, better go home, no use of making fuss.

Nobin. Sadhu, call on God. He is the only support of the helpless.

[NOBIN MADHAB *goes away*]

Wood. Thou slave of the slave. Take him to the Factory, Dewan, and give him the advance according to rules.

[WOOD *goes away*]

Gopi. Sadhu, come along to the Factory. Does the Saheb forget his words? Now ashes have fallen on your ready-made rice; the Yama* of Indigo has attacked you, and you have no safety.

FIRST ACT—FOURTH SCENE.

GOLUK CHUNDER BASU'S *Hall*

Enter SOIRINDRI, *preparing a hair-string*

Soirindri. I never did prepare such a piece of hair-string. The youngest Bou[9] is the most fortunate, since whatever I do in her name proves successful. The hair-string I have made, is the thinnest possible. According to the hair, the hair-string is made. Oh! how beautiful the hair is; it is like unto that of the Goddess Kali. The face is as the lotus, always smiling. People may say whatever they choose to one whom they donot like. I don't attend to that. For my part, I feel pleasure when I see the face of the youngest Bou. I consider the youngest Bou in the same light, as I do Bipin. The youngest Bou loves me as her own mother.

SARALOTA *enters with a braid in her hand*

Saralota. My sister, just see whether I have been able to make the under part of this braid? Is it not made?

Soirindri. (*Seeing the braid*) Yes, now it is well-made. O! My sister, this part is made somewhat bad; the yellow does not look well after the red colour.

Saralota. I wove it by observing your braid.

Soirindri. Is the yellow after the red in that?

Saralota. No; in that the green is after the red. But because my green thread is finished, therefore I placed the yellow after that.

Soirindri. You were not able, I see, to wit for the market-day. I see, my sister, every thing is in haste with you. As it is said, "Hurry is in Brindabun; but as soon as the desire rises, there is no more waiting.[10]

Saralota. Oh! what fault have I committed for that? Can that be got in the market? As the last market-day, my mother-in-law sent for it; but that was not got.

Soirindri. When they write a letter this time to my husband's brothers, we shall send to ask for threads of various colours.

Saralota. Sister, how many days are there still remaining of this month?

Soirindri. (*Laughingly*) On the place where the pain is, the hand touches. As soon as his[11] college closes, he shall come home, therefore you are counting the days. Ah! my sister, your mind's words are come out.

Saralota. I say truly, my sister; I never meant that.

Soirindri. How very good-natured our Bindu Madhab is! His words are honey. When we hear his letters read, they rain like drops of nectar. I never saw such love towards one's brother as his, and also his brother shows the greatest affection for him. When he hears the name of Bindu Madhab, heart overflows with joy, and it becomes, as it were, expanded. Also, as he is, so our Saralota is, (*Pressing Saralota's cheek*) Saralota is as honesty itself (Saralota). Have I not brought with me my huka? It is the first thing which I have forgotten to bring with me.

Enter ADURI

Aduri, will you just go and bring me some ashes of tobacco?

Aduri. Where shall I now seek for it?

Soirindri. It is stuck on the thatched roof of the cook-room, on the right side of the steps leading into the room.

Aduri. Then let me bring the ladder from the threshing floor; else how can I reach to the roof?

Saralota. Very well.

Soirindri. Why can she not understand our mother-in-law's word? Don't you understand what steps are, and what Dain[12] signifies?

Aduri. Why shall I become a Dain; it is my fate. As soon as a poor woman becomes old and her teeth fall out she is immediately called a Dain. I shall speak of this to our mistress; am I become so old as to be called a Dain?

Soirindri. (*Rising up*) Youngest Bou, sit down, I am coming; today we shall hear the Betal of Vidyasagar.

[SOIRINDRI *goes away*]

Aduri. That Sagar allows marriage to the widows; fie! fie! Are there not two parties to that? I am of the Ajah's[13] party.

Saralota. Aduri, did your husband love you well?

Aduri. O young Haldarni, do not raise that word of sorrow now. Even up to this day, when his face comes to my mind's eye, my heart, as it wee, bursts with sorrow. He loved me very much, and he even wanted to give me a *daughter-in-law.*

Let alone a Paiche;
  What worth indeed may it be!
I can find a gold bangle for one,
  If after my heart she be!

Does it fit in? He even did not give me time to sleep. Whenever I felt drowsy, he said, "O my love, are your sleeping?

Saralota. Did you call him by his name?

Aduri. Fie! Fie! The husband is one's Lord. Is it proper to call him by his name?

Saralota. Then, how did you call him?

Aduri. I used to say, "O! do you hear me?

Enter SOIRINDRI *again*

Soirindri. Who was irritated this fool again?

Aduri. She was inquiring after my husband, therefore, I was speaking with her.

Soirindri. (*Laughing*) I never saw a greater fool than this our youngest Bou. While having so many subjects of talk, still you are exciting Aduri in order to hear from her about her husband.

Enter REBOTI *and* KHETROMANI

Welcome, my dear sister, I have been sending for you for these many days; still I see, you don't get time to come. O our youngest Bou, here take your Khetro; here she is come (*To Reboti*). She was troubling me for these days, saying My sister Khetro, of the Ghosh family, is come from her father-in-law's house; then why is she not yet coming to our house?

Reboti. Yes such is your love towards us. Khetro, bow down before our aunts.

[KHETROMANI *bows down*]

Soirindri. Remain with your husband for life; wear vermilion even in your white hair; let your iron circlet[14] continue for ever and the next time you go to your father-in-law's house, take your new-born son with you.

Aduri. The young Haldarni speaks most fluently before me; but this young girl bowed down before her; and she spoke not a single word.

Soirindri. Oh! What of that! Aduri, just go and call our mother-in-law here.

[ADURI *goes out*]

The fool knows not what she says. For how many months is she[15] with child!

Reboti. Did I yet express that; the bad turn of my fortune (*broken forehead*) is such, that I yet cannot say whether that is actually the case or not. It is because that you are very familiar with us, that I tell it you—at the end of this month she will be in her fourth month.

Saralota. But her belly has not yet bulged!

Soirindri. What madness! She has not yet completed her third month and you expect a bulged-belly!

Saralota. Khetro, why did you cut off the curls of your hair?

Khetro. The elder brother of my husband was much displeased at seeing the curls in my hair. He told our mistress (mother-in-law), that curls agree best with prostitutes and women of rich families. I was so much ashamed at hearing his words, that from that very day I cut off my curls.

Soirindri. Youngest Bou, the shades of evening are spreading about; just go, my sister, and bring the clothes.

Enter ADURI *again*

Saralota. (*Standing up*) Aduri, come with me; let us go up, and bring down the clothes.

Aduri. Let young Halder first come home, ha! ha! ha!

[*Ashamed* SARALOTA *goes away*]

Soirindri. (*With anger, yet laughing*) Go thou unfortunate fool; at every word, you joke. Where is my mother-in-law?

Enter SABITRI

Yes, he is come.

Sabitri. Ghosh Bou, art thou come, and hast thou brought your daughter with you? Yes, you have done well. Bipin was making a noise, therefore, I sent him out and am come here.

Reboti. My mother, I bow down before you. Khetro, bow down before your grandmother.

[KHETROMANI *bows down*]

Sabitri. Be happy, be the mother of seven sons. (*Coughing aside*) My eldest Bou, just go into the room. I think my son is up. Oh! my son has no regular time for bathing, neither for taking food. My Nobin is become very weak by mere vain thoughts—(*Aside, "Aduri"*) Oh! my daughter, go in soon. I think, he is asking for water.

Soirindri. (*Aside, to Aduri*) Aduri, calling for you.

Aduri. Calling for me, but a asking for you.

Soirindri. Thou burnt-faced. Sister Ghose meet me another day.

[*Exit* SOIRINDRI]

Reboti. O my mother, here is none else. Some great danger has fallen upon me, that Podi Moyrani came to our house yesterday.

Sabitri. Rama! Rama! Rama! who allows that nasty fool to enter his house? What is left of her virtue? She has only to write her name in the public notices.

Reboti. My mother, but what shall I do? My house is not an enclosed one. When our males go out to the fields the house is no more a house; but you may call it a mart. That strumpet says (I do shrink at the thought), she says, that the young Saheb is become, as it were, mad at seeing Khetromani; and wants to see her in the Factory.

Aduri. Fy! fy! fy! bad smell of the onion! Can we go to Saheb? Fy! fy! fy! bad smell of the onion! I shall never be out any more alone. I can bear every other thing, but the smell of the onion I can never bear. Fy! fy! fy! bad smell of the onion!

Reboti. But, my mother, is not the virtue of the poor actual virtue? That fool[16] says, he will give money, give grants of lands for the cultivation of rice and also give some employment to our son-in-law. Fie! fie! to money. Is virtue something to be sold? Has it any price? What can I say? That fool was an agent of the Saheb, or else I would have broken her mouth with one kick. My daughter is become thunderstruck from yesterday; and now and then, she is starting with fear.

Aduri. Oh, the beard! When he speaks, it is like a he-goat twisting about its mouth. For my part, I would never be able to go there as long as he does not leave off his onions and beard. Fie! fie! fie! the bad smell of the onion!

Reboti. Mother, again that unfortunate fool says, if you do not send her with me, I shall take her away by certain latyals.

Sabitri. What more is the Burmese (*Mug*) power? Can any one take away a woman from a house in the British Dominion?

Reboti. O my Mother! Every violence can be committed in the ryot's house. Taking away the women, they bring the men under their power. In giving advances for Indigo they can do this; only then cannot commit this before one's eyes. Don't you know, my mother, the other day, because certain parties did not agree to sign a fictitious receipt of advances, they broke down their house and took away by force the wife of one of the Babus.

Sabitri. What anarchy is this! Did you inform Sadhu of this.

Reboti. No, my mother. He is already become mad on account of the Indigo; again, if he hear this, will he keep quite? Through excessive anger he will rather smite his head with axe.

Sabitri. Very well, I shall make this known to Sadhu, through my husband; you need not say anything. What misfortune is this! This Indigo Planters can do anything. Then why do I hear it generally said, that the Sahebs are strict in dispensing justice. Again, my son Bindu Madhab speaks much in praise of them. Therefore I think that these are not Sahebs; no, they are the dregs (*Chandal*) of Sahebs.

Reboti. Respecting another word which Moyrani has said, I think the eldest Babu has not heard of it that a new order has been proclaimed, by which the wicked Sahebs, by opening a communication with the Magistrate, can throw any one into prison for six months; again that they are making preparations for doing the same with the Babus.

Sabitri. (*Sighing deeply*) If this be in the mind of God it will be.

Reboti. Many other things she said, my mother : but I was not able to understand her. Is it the fact, that there is no appeal when once a person is imprisoned?

Aduri. I think the wretch has aggravated this imprisoning.

Sabitri. Aduri, be silent a little, my child.

Reboti. Moreover, the wife of the Indigo Planter, in order to make her husband's case strong (pakka), has sent a letter to the Magistrate, since it is said that the Magistrate hears her words most attentively.

Aduri. I saw the lady; she has no shame at all. When the Magistrate of the Zillah (whose name occasions great terror) goes riding about through the village, the lady also rides on horseback, with him. —The Bou riding about on a horse! Because the aunt of Kasi once laughed before the elder brother of her husband, all people ridiculed her; while this was the Magistrate of the Zillah.

Sabitri. I see, wretched woman, thou wilt occasion some great misfortune one day. Now it is evening. Ghose Bou, better go home. There is Durga.

Reboti. Now, I go my mother. I shall buy some oil from the shop; then there will be light in the house.

[*Exit* REBOTI *and* KHETROMANI]

Sabitri. Can't you remain without speaking something at every word?

Enter SARALOTA *with clothes on her hand*

Aduri. Here, our washerwoman is come with her clothes.

Sabitri. Thou, fool, why is she a washerwoman? She is my Bou of gold, my Goddess of good Fortune (*patting her back*). Is there no one in

my family excepting you to bring down the clothes? Can't you, for one dunda[17] sit quite in one place? Art thou born of such a mad woman? How did you tear off your cloth? I think you bruised yourself. Ah, her body is, as it were, a red lotus; and this one bruise has made the blood to come out with violence. Now, my daughter, I tell you, never move up and down the steps in the dark, in such a manner.

Enter SOIRINDRI

Soirindri. Now, our young Bou, let us go to the ghat.

Sabitri. Now, my daughters, while the evening light continues, you two together go and wash yourselves.

[*Exit all*]

SECOND ACT—FIRST SCENE.

The GODOWN *of* BEGUNBARI FACTORY

TORAPA *and four other Ryots sitting.*

Torapa Why do they not kill me at once? I can never show myself ungrateful. That eldest Babu, who was preserved my caste; he, through whose influence I am living here; he, who by reserving my plough and the cows, is preserving my life,—shall I by giving false evidence, throw the father of that Babu into prison? I can never do that; I would rather give my life.

First Ryot. Before sticks there can be no words; the stroke of Shamchand is a very terrible thrust. Have we a film on our eyes : did we not serve our eldest Babu? But, then, what can we do? If we do not give evidence they will never keep up as we are. Wood Saheb stood upon my breast and blood began to fall drop by drop And the feet of the horse were, as it were, the hoofs of the ox.

Second Ryot Thrusting in the nails; don't you know the nails which are stuck under the shoes worn by the Sahebs?

Torapa. (*Grinding his teeth with anger*) Why do you speak of the nails? My heart is bursting with having seen this blood. What do I say? If I can once et him in the Vatarnari field, with one slap I can raise him in the air; and at once put a stop to all his "gad dams" and other words of chastisement.

Third Ryot. I am only a hireling, and keep men under me. When I heart about the plan which our master formed I immediately refused to take any indigo business on my hand; saying I shall never work for that Why was I then confined in the godown? I thought that serving under him at this time, I shall be able to make a good collection and shall be able to attend to my friends; but I am rotting here in this place for five days and again I am to go to that *Andarabad.*

Second Ryot. I went to that Andarabad once or twice; as also to that Factory of Bhabnapore, every one speaks good of Saheb of that place; that Saheb once sent me to the Court, then I saw much fun in that place. Ha! just as the Magistrate, sitting at the tails of the two Mukhtears (*lawyers*) shouted "Hyal" (Hallow), the two brother-in-laws in the persons

of the Mukhtears kicked up a row. The wordy battle they fought made me think thee was literally a bull-fight as between the while ox of Sadhukhan and the bull-calf of Jamadar on the field of Moyna.

Torapa. Did he find any fault with you? The Saheb of Bhabnapore never raises a false disturbance. "By speaking the truth, we shall ride on horseback." Had all Sahebs been of the same character with him then none would have spoken ill of the Sahebs.

Second Ryot. My heart overflows with joy.

Now his torturing is all put a stop to. In his godown thee are now seven persons, one of them is a child. The vile man has filled his house also with kine and calves. Oh, what robbery is he carrying on!

Torapa. As soon as they get a Saheb, who is a good man, they want to destroy him. They are holding a meeting to drive off the Magistrate.

Second Ryot. I cannot understand whether they found fault with the Magistrate of the other Zillah.

Torapa. He did not go to dine in the factory. They prepared a dinner for the Magistrate, in order to get him within their power, but the Magistrate concealed himself like a stolen cow; he did not go to dinner. He is a person of a good family. Why should he go to the Indigo planters? We have now understood, these Planters are the low people of Belata.[18]

First Ryot. Then how did the late Governor Saheb go about all the Indigo Factories, being feasted like a bridegroom just before the celebration of the marriage?[19] Did you not see that the Planter Saheb brought him to this factory well-adorned like a bridegroom?

Second Ryot. I think he has some share in this Indigo Company.

Torapa. No! can the Governor take a share in Indigo affairs? He came to increase his fame. If God preserve our present Governor, then we shall be able to procure something for our sustenance; and the spectre of Indigo shall no more hang on our shoulders.

Third Ryot. (*With fear*) I die. If the ghost of this burden once attack a person, is it true that it does not quit him soon? My wife said son.

Torapa. Why have they brought this brother-in-law here? For fear of the Sahebs, people are leaving the village; and my uncle Bochoroddi has formed the following sentence :

"The man with eyes like those of the car, is an ignorant fool;

So the Indigo of the Indigo Factory is an instrument of punishment."

Bochoroddi is very expert in forming such sentences.

Second Ryot. Did not you hear another sentence which was composed by Nita Atai?

"The Missionaries have destroyed the caste;

The Factory monkeys have destroyed the rice."

Torapa. What a composition! But what is really meant by "Destroyed the caste" what is it?

Second Ryot. "The Missionaries have destroyed the caste;

The Factory monkeys have destroyed the rice."

Fourth Ryot. Ha! I do not know what is taking place in my house: I am become the inhabitant of three villages at once. I came away to Svaropur, and through the advice of Bose, I threw away the advance which was offered me. When my young child was sick I came to Bose to get from him a little sugarcandy. Ah! how very kind he was; how agreeable and good-looking in countenance I found him; and sitting as solemn as an elephant.

Torapa. How many bighas have they given this year?

Fourth Ryot. Last year I prepared ten bighas but as to the price of that, they raised great confusion. This year again, they have given advances for fifteen bighas and I am doing exactly as they are ordering me, still, they leave not off insulting me.

First Ryot. I am labouring with my plough for these two years, and I have cultivated a little piece of ground. That piece of ground which I prepared this year, I kept for sesamum; but one day, young Saheb, riding on his horse, came to the place, and waiting there himself, took possession of the whole piece. How can the ryots live if this is to continue?

Torapa. This is only the intrigue of the wicked Amin. Does the Saheb know everything about land? This fool goes about like a revengeful dog : when we sees any good piece of land, he immediately gives notice of it to the Saheb The Saheb has no want of money, and he has no need for borrowing money on credit. Then why is it that the fool does so; if he has to cultivate Indigo, let him do so; let him buy oxen, let him prepare ploughs; if he cannot guide the plough himself, let him keep men under him. What want have you of lands? If you can cultivate the whole village;

and we do not refuse to give the village. In that case the land can overflow with Indigo in two years. But he will not do it.

—(*Aside*, ho! ho! ho! ma! ma!) Gazi Saheb! Gazi Saheb! Durga! Durga![20] call your Rama. Within this there are ghosts. Be silent, be silent.

(*Aside*, Oh Indigo; You came to this land for our utter ruin. Ah! I cannot any more suffer this torture. I cannot say how many other Factories there are of this Concern. Within this one month-and-a half, I have already drunk the water of fourteen Factories; and I do not know in what Factory I am now; and how can I know that, while I am taken in the night from one Factory to another, with my eyes entirely shut. Oh! my mother; Where art thou now?)

Third Ryot. Rama! Rama! Rama! Kali! Kali! Durga! Ganesh! Ashra!

Torapa. Silence, silence.

(*Aside*, Ah, I can make myself free from this hell, if I take the advance for five bighas of land. Oh? my uncle, it is now proper to take the advance. Now I see no means of giving the notice; my life is on the point of leaving the body. I have no more any power to speak. Oh my mother, where art thou now? I have not seen thy holy feet for a month-and-a half.)

Third Ryot. I shall peak of this to my life, did you hear now? Although these are become ghosts after death, still have they not been able to extricate themselves from the Indigo advances.

First Ryot. Art thou so very ignorant?

Torapa. A person of a good family; I have understood that by the words My uncle Prana, can you once take me up on your shoulders, than I can ask him where his residence is?

First Ryot. Thou art a Mussalman.

Torapa. Then you had better rise on my shoulders and see—(*sits down*) rise up—(*sits on the shoulders*) take hold of the wall; bring your face before the window—(*seeing* GOPI CHURN *at a distance*) come down, come down, my uncle, Gopi is coming (*first Ryot fall down*).

Enter GOPI CHURN *and* MR. ROSE *with his Ramakanta*[21] *in his hand.*

Third Ryot. Dewan, there is a ghost in this room. Now, it was crying aloud.

Gopi. If you don't say as I teach you, you must become a ghost of the very same kind. (*Aside to Mr. Rose*) These persons have known about Mojumder's confinement, we must no more keep him in this Factory. It was not proper to keep him in that room.

Rose I shall hear of that afterwards. What ryot has refused; what rascal is so very wicked? (*Stamps his feet*).

Gopi. These are all well-prepared. This Mussalman is very wicked; he says, I can never show myself ungrateful (*nimakharami*).

Torapa. (*Aside*) O my father! How very terrible the stick is. Now I must agree with them; as to future considerations I shall see what I can do afterwards. (*Openly*) Pardon me, Saheb! I, also, am become the same with you.

Planter Be silent, thou child of the sow! This Ramkant is very sweet. (*Strikes with Ramakanta and also kicks him.*)

Torapa. Oh! Oh! my mother, I am now dead. My uncle Prana, give me a little water. I die for water. My father, father?

Rose. Shall not filth be discharged into your mouth? (*Strikes with his shoes*)

Torapa. Whatever thou shalt say, I shall do. Before God, I ask pardon of thee, my Lord

Rose. Now the Villain has left his wickedness To-night all must be sent to the Court. Just write to the Attorney, that as long as the evidence is not given, not one of these shall be let out. The Agent shall go with them. (*To the Third Ryot*) why art thou crying? (*Giving a kick*).

Third Ryot. Bou, where art thou? These are murdering me. O my mother! Bou! My mother! I am killed, I am killed (*Falls upside down on the ground*)

Rose. Thou, stupid, art become mad (*bonra*).

[*Exit* MR ROSE]

Gopi. Now, Torapa, have you got your full of the onion and the shoe?

Torapa. Oh Dewanji, preserve me by giving a little water. I am on the point of death.

Gopi. The Indigo warehouse and the steam engine room, these are places where the sweet shoots forth and water is drunk. Now, all of you come with me, that you may at once drink water.

[*Exit all*]

SECOND ACT—SECOND SCENE.

THE BED-ROOM OF BINDU MADHAB

SARALOTA *sitting with a letter in her hand.*

Saralota. Now, my dear love with an honest tongue is not come, and an elephant, as it were, is treading on the lotuslike heart. I have become hopeless amid very great hope. In expectation of the coming of the Lord of my life. I was waiting with greater disquietude of mind than the swallow (*chatak*) does when waiting for the drops of rain at the approaching rainy season. The way in which I was counting the days exactly corresponded with what my sister said, that each day appeared, as it were, a year (*deep sigh*). The expectation as to the coming of my husband is now of no effect. The course of his life itself will prove successful, if the great action in which he is now engaged, can prove so. Oh, Lord of my life! We are born women, and cannot even go out to walk in the garden; we are unable to walk out in the city; can by no means form clubs for general good; we have no Colleges nor Courts, not Brahma Samaja of our own; we have nothing of our own, to compose the mind when it is once disturbed; and moreover. we can never blame a woman when she feels ay disquietude. O my Lord, we have only one to depend upon—the husband is the object of wife's thoughts, of her understanding, her study, her acquisition, her meeting, her society; in short, this jewel—the husband—is all to a virtuous woman. O thou letter! thou art come from the hand of the dear object of my heart, I shall kiss thee, (*kisses it*); in thee is the name of my lord; I shall hold thee on my burnt heart, (*keeps it on her breast*). Ah! how sweet are the words of my Lord; as often as I read it, my mind is more and more charmed (*reads*).

MY DEAR SARALOTA,

In my letter I cannot express what anxiety my mind feels to see your sweet face. O what inexpressible pleasure do I feel when I place your beautiful (moon-like) face on my breast! I thought that moment of happiness is come; but pain immediately overtook pleasure. The College is closed, but a great misfortune has come upon me; through the grace of God, if I be not able to extricate myself from it, I shall never be able anymore to show my face to thee. The Indigo planters have secretly brought an accusation against my father in the court; their main design

being, in some way or other, to throw him into jail. I have sent letters one after another, to my brother giving him this information; and I myself am remaining here with the greatest care possible. never disturb yourself with vain thoughts. The merciful Father must certainly make us successful. My dear, I have not forgotten the Bengali translation of "Shakespeare"; it cannot be got now in the shops, but one of my friends, Bonkima by name, has given me one copy. When I come home, I shall bring it with me. My dear, what a great source of pleasure is the acquisition of learning! I am conversing with you, although at such a great distance. Ah! what great happiness would my mind have enjoyed if my mother did not forbid you to send letters to me.

"I am, yours,
Bindu Madhab."

As to myself I have a full confidence as to that. If there be any fault in your character, then who should be an example of good conduct? Because I am fickle; cannot sit for some time quietly in one place, my mother-in-law calls me the daughter of a mad woman. But, where is my fickleness now? In the place where I have opened the letter of my dear Lord, I have spent nearly a fourth part of the day. The fickleness of the exterior part has now gone into the heart. As, on the boiling of the rice, the froth rising up makes the surface quiet, but the rice within is agitated; so am I now. I have not that smiling face now. A sweet smile is the wife of happiness; and as soon as happiness dies, the sweet smile goes along with it My Lord, when thou shalt prove successful, every thing shall be preserved. If I am to see your face disquieted, all sides will be dark unto me. O my restless mind, wilt thou be not quieted? If you remain unquiet, that can be suffered. As to your weeping none can see it, nor can hear it; but my eyes! You shall throw me into shame, (*rubbing her eyes*); *if* ye are not pacified, I shall not be able to go out of doors.

Enter ADURI

Aduri. What are you doing here? The elder Haldarni[22] is not able to go to the tank-side. All whom I see are of a disturbed countenance.

Saralota. (*A deep sigh*) Let us then go.

Aduri. I see you have not yet touched the oil. Your hairs are yet dusty, and you have not yet left the letter. Does your young Haldar write my name in the letter?

Saralota. Has the Bara Thakur (the eldest brother of the husband) finished his bathing?

Aduri. The eldest Haldar is gone to the village. A law-suit is being carried on. Was that not written in your letter! Our master was weeping.

Saralota. (*Aside*) Truly, my Lord! Thou shalt not be able to show thy face, if thou can't not prove successful.

(*Openly*) Let us now rub ourselves with oil in the cook-room.

[*Exit both*]

SECOND ACT—THIRD SCENE.

A ROAD POINTING THREE WAYS

Enter PODI MOYRANI.

Podi. It is the degenerate Amin who is ruining the country. Is it through my own choice that I am levelling the axe at my feet,[23] by giving the young women to the Saheb? As to that preparation which Ray made, had it not been caught[24] by Sadhu, she would have been provided with food and clothing for life. Ah, it bursts my heart when I see the face of Khetromany. Have I no feelings of compassion because I have made a paramour my companion? Whenever she see me still, she comes to me, calling me Aunt! Aunt! Can the mother, with a firm heart, give such a golden deer into the grasp of the tiger? How detestable is this, that for the sake of money, I have given up my caste and my life and also am obliged to touch the bed of a Buno (rude tribe). That libertine, the elder Saheb, has made it a practice to beat me whenever he finds me, and has also said, he will cut off my nose and ears—that vile man is come to an old age, can keep women in confinement, and can kick them; such a vile man, I have not seen in the present day. Let me go to the blackmouthed Amin and tell him that shall not be effected by me. Have I any power to go out in the town? Whenever the nasty fellows of the neighbourhood see me, they follow me as the Phinge (a kind of bird) does the crow.

(*Aside a song*)

Whenever I sit down to reap the rice in the field. Her eyes immediately come before my sight.

Enter a COWHERD

Cowherd. Saheb, have not insects attacked thine Indigo twigs?

Podi. Let them attack thy mother and sister, thou degenerate fool. Leave off thy mother's breast, go to the house of Death; go to Colmighata, to the grave.[25]

Cowherd. I have also sent orders to prepare a pair of weeding knives.

Enter a LATYAL *or* CLUB-MAN

Oh! the Latyal of the Indigo Factory!

The cowherd flies off swiftly.

Latyal. Thou, Oh lotus-faced, hast made the tooth-powder very dear.

Podi. (*Seeing the silver chain round the waist of the Latyal*) Your chain is very grand.

Club-man. Don't you know, my dear, wherefrom comes the clothing of the bailiff and the dress of the nautch girl?

Podi. I wanted a black calf from you a long while ago, but yet you did not give it me. My brother, I shall not ask from thee any more.

Club-man. Dear lotus-faced, don't be angry with me. Tomorrow, we shall go to plunder the people called Shamanagara; and if I can get a black calf, I shall immediately keep that in your cow-house. When I shall return with my fish, I shall pass by your shop.

[*Exit the* CLUB-MAN]

Podi. The Planter Sahebs do nothing but rob. If the ryots be loaded in a less degree with exactions they can preserve their lives; and you[26] can get your Indigo. The Munshies of Shamanagara entreated most earnestly to get ten portions of land free. "The thief never hears the instructions of Religion." The wretched elder Saheb remained quiet having burnt his wretched tongue.

Enter four BOYS *of a native Pathshala*

Four Boys. (*Keeping down their mats and expressing great mirth with the clapping of their hands.*)

My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?
My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?
My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?

Podi. My child Kesoba, I am your aunt. Never use such words to me.

Four Boys. (*Dance together*) My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?

Podi. My dear Ambika. I am your sister; don't use me in this manner.

Four Boys. (*Dance round Podi*)

My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?
My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?
My dear Moyrani, where is your Indigo?

Enter NOBIN MADHAB

Podi. What a shame is this, that I exposed my face to the elder Babu.

[*Exit* PODI, *covering herself with a Veil*]

Nobin. Wicked and profligate woman. (*To the children*) You are playing on the road still; it is now too late, go home now.

[*Exit Four Boys*]

Ah! I can within five days established a school for these boys, if only the tyranny of the Indigo be one stopped. The Inspector of this part of the country is a very good man. How very good a man becomes, if only learning be acquired. He is young; but in his conversation he has the experience of years. He ha a great desire that a school be established in this country. I am also not unwilling to give money for this purpose; the large Bungalow which I have, can be a good place for a school; moreover, what is more happy than to have the boys of one's one country to read and write and study in his own house, this is the true success of wealth and of labour. Bindu Madhab brought the Inspector with him, and it is his desire, that all with one mind try to establish the school. But observing the unfortunate state of the country, he was obliged to keep his design to himself. How very mild quiet, goodnatured, and wise is he become now! Wisdom in younger years is as beautiful as the fruits in a small plant. In reading of the sorrow, which my brother has expressed in his letter, even the hard stone is melted and the heart of the Indigo planter would become soft. I cannot now rise up to go home, I do not see any means; I was not able to bring one of the five to my side, and cannot find where they are taken away.[27] I think Torapa will never speak a lie. It will be a great loss to us, if the other four give evidence; especially as I was not able to make the least preparation; and again the Magistrate is a great friend of Mr. Wood.

Enter a RYOT *two* PEADAS *or Bailiffs of the Police, and a* TAIDGIR *of the Indigo Factory*

Ryot. My elder Babu, preserve my two children; there is no one else to feed them. Last year, I gave eight carts' load of Indigo and did not get a single piece for that, and also I am bound, as with cords, for the remainder. Again they will take me to Andrabad.

Guard. The advance-money of the Indigo and the marking nut of the washerman behave alike; as soon as they come in contact, they

become mostly joined. You villain come, you must first go to the Dewanji; your elder Babu also shall come to this end.

Ryot. Come, I don't fear this. I would rather have my body rot in the jail than any more prepare the Indigo of that white man. My God! My God! none looks on the poor (*weeps*). My elder Babu, give my children food; they brought me from the field; and I was not able to see them once.

[*Exit all, except* NOBIN MADHAB]

Nobin. What injustice! These two children will die without food in the same way as the new-born young of the hare suffers when the hare is in the hand of the savage hunters.

Enter RAY CHURN

Ray. Had not my brother caught hold of me, I would have put a stop to her (*Refers to Podi*) breathing, I would have killed her; then at the utmost, I had been hanged for six months.[28] That villain!

Nobin. Ray Churn, where art thou going?

Ray. Our mistress ordered me to call Putakur, The stupid Podi told me that the bailiff will bring the summons tomorrow.

[*Exit* RAY CHURN]

Nobin. Oh! Oh! Oh! That which never look place in this family has now come to pass. My father is very peaceful, honest, and of a sincere mind, knows not what disputes and enmities are, never goes out on village, trembles with fear at the name of Court affairs, and even shed tears when he read the letter. If he is to go to Indrabad, he will turn mad; and if, to the jail, he will throw himself into the stream. Ah, such are the misfortunes that are to fall on him while I, his son, am living : My mother is not so much afraid as my father is, she does not lose hope at once; with a firm mind she is now invoking God. My dear-eyed is become, as it were, the deer in my volcano;[29] she is become mad with fear and anxiety. Her father died in an Indigo Factory and her fear now, is lest the same happens to her husband. How many sides am I to keep quiet; is it proper to fly off with the whole family or, is it not right that to do good unto others is the highest virtue? I shall not turn aside hastily. I see, I am not able to do any good to Shamanagara; still, what work is there which is beyond the power of exertion? Let me see what I can do.

Enter two PANDITS

First P. My child, is the house of Goluk Chunder Bose in this

quarter? I heard from my uncle, the person is very honest—the grandeur of the Bose family.

Nobin. (*Bowing before him*) Sir, I am his eldest son.,

First P. Yes! yes! very honest : To have such a son is not the result of a little virtue.

Second P. We had been invited by Babu Arabindu, of Sougandha. To-day, we remain in the house of Goluk Chunder; and shall do good unto you.

Nobin. This is my great fortune. Sirs, come by this way.

[*Exit all*]

THIRD ACT—First Scene.

Before the Factory in Begunbari

Enter Gopi Churn *and a* Native Jailor

Gopi. As long as your share is not less, you do not care to bring anything to my notice.

Jailor. Can that filth be digested by one person eating the whole? I told him, if you eat, give a part to the Dewanji; but he says what power has your Dewan? He is not so much the son of a Keot, (*Shoemaker caste*) that he shall direct the Saheb like unto one leading a monkey.

Gopi. Very well, now go, I shall show that Keot (what a club) how strong he is.

[*Exit Khalasi*]

The fellow has got so much power through the authority of the younger Saheb. I shall also say it is a very easy thing for one to carry on his work, if his master be the husband of his sister. The elder Saheb becomes very angry at this word. But the fellow is very angry with me; at every word, he shows me the Shamchand. That day he kicked me with his stocking on. These few days, I see that his temper is become somewhat mild towards me; since Goluk Bose is summoned, he was expressed a little kindness. A person is considered very expert by the Saheb, if he can bring about the ruin of many "One becomes a good Physician by the death of one hundred patients."

(*Seeing* Mr. Wood)

Here he is coming; let me first soften up his mind by giving him some information about the Boses

Enter Mr. Wood

Saheb, tears have now come out of the eyes of Nobin Bose. Never was he punished more severely. His garden is taken away from him; the small pieces of land he had are all included among the lands which are given to Gadai pod (*a low caste*), his cultivation is nearly put a stop to, his barns are all become empty, and he was sent into Court twice; in the midst of so many troubles, he still stood firm; but now he has fallen down.

Planter. The rascal was not able to do any thing in Shamanagara.

Gopi. Saheb, the Munshis came to him; but he told them, "my mind is not at rest now, my limbs are become powerless through weeping for my father, and I am, as it were, become mad." On observing the wretched condition of Nobin, about seven or eight ryots of Shamanagara have all given up, and all are doing exactly as your Honour is ordering them.

Planter. You are a very good Dewan, and you have formed a very good plan.

Gopi. I knew Goluk Bose to be a coward, and that if he were obliged to go to Court, he would turn mad. As Nobin has affection for his father, he will of course be punished; and it was for this reason that I gave the advice to make the old man the defendant. Also, the plan which your Honour formed was not the less good. Our Indigo cultivation has been nearly made on the sides of his tank; thus laying the snake's eggs in his heart.

Planter. With one stone two birds have been killed; ten bighas of land are cultivated with Indigo, and also that fool is punished. He shed much tears, saying that if Indigo be planted near the tank we shall be obliged to leave our habitation; but I said, to cultivate Indigo in one's habitation is to the best advantage.

Gopi. And the fool brought an action in the Court, on hearing that reply.

Planter. That will be of no effect; that Magistrate is a very good man. If the case turn into a civil one it will never be concluded in less than five years. That Magistrate is a great friend of mine. Just see, by the new Act, the four rascals were thrown into prison only by making your evidence strong. This Act is the become the brother of the sword.

Gopi. Saheb, in order that those four ryots might not suffer loss in their cultivation, Nobin Bose has given his own plough, kine, and harrow for the ploughing of their lands; and he is trying his utmost that their families might not suffer great trouble.

Planter. When he is required to plough his land, for which advances are allowed, he says, "my ploughs and kine are less in number." He is very wicked; and now he is very well punished. Dewan, now you have done very well, and now I see work may be carried on by you without loss.

Gopi. Saheb, it is your own favour. My desire is that advances

should be increased every year. But that cannot be done by me alone; some confident Amin and Khalasis are necessary. Can the indigo cultivation be improved by those who, for the sake of two rupees, occasioned the loss of the produce of three bighas of lands?

Planter. I have understood it, the rascally Amin occasioned this confusion.

Gopi. Saheb, Chander Goldar is a new-comer here, and has not taken any advance. The Amin one, according to regular custom, threw one rupee on his ground as an advance. That person, in order to be allowed to return that rupee, even shed tears and came along with the Amin as far as Ruthtollah, begging him earnestly to take it back. There he met with Nilkanta Babu, who has chosen the profession of an Attorney immediately after leaving the College.

Planter. I know that rascal; he it is, who writes everything concerning me in the newspapers.

Gopi. Their papers can never stand before yours, can by no means bear a comparison; and moreover, they are as the earthen bottles for cooling water compared to the jars of Dacca. But to bring the newspapers within your influence, great expense has been incurred. That takes place according to time; as is said,

"According to circumstance, the friend becomes an enemy;
The lame ass is sold at the price of the horse."

Planter. What did Nilkanta do?

Gopi. He sharply rebuked the Amin; and the Amin with no little shame brought back that one rupee, with two rupees more, from Goldar's house. Chander Goldar would have been able very easily to supply the Indigo for three or four bighas. Is this the work of a savant: If I can conduct the Dewanny and the business of the Amin; then this kind of ingratitude can be stopped.

Planter. Great wickedness this is; evident ingratitude.

Gopi. Saheb, grant pardon for this bad conduct; the Amin brought his own sister to our younger Saheb's room.

Planter. Yes : Yes : I know; that rascal and Podi corrupted our young Saheb. I must give that wicked fool some instruction very soon. Send him to my sitting room.

[*Exit* MR. WOOD]

Gopi. Just see, in whose hand the monkey plays best. The Kayasth is one rogue, and the crow another.

"Now have you fallen under the stroke of the Khait; where even the grand-father of the sister's husband losses the game!"

THIRD ACT—SECOND SCENE.

THE BEDROOM OF NOBIN MADHAB

NOBIN MADHAB *and* SOIRINDRI *sitting.*

Soirindri. Lord of my soul, what is preferable, whether the ornament or my father-in-law? That, for which thou art wandering about day and night; that, for which thou hast left thy food and sleep; that, for which thou art shedding tears incessantly; that, for which thy pleasant face has been depressed; and that which has occasioned they headache; my dear Lord, can I not for that give away this my trifling ornament?

Nobin. My dear, you can, with ease, give; but with what face shall I take it? What great troubles the husband is to undergo in order to dress his wife; he has to swim in the rapid stream to throw himself into the deep ocean, engage in battles, to climb mountains, to live in the wilderness and to go before the mouth of the tiger. The husband adorns his wife, with so much trouble; am I so very foolish as to take away the ornament from the very same wife. O my Lotus-eyed, wait a little. Let me see this day, and if, finally I cannot procure it, then I shall take your ornaments afterwards.

Soirindri. O my heart's love! we are very unfortunate now; and who is there that shall give you on loan the sum of Rs. 500/- at such a time. I am entreating you again, take my ornaments and those of your youngest Bou, and try to procure money from a banker. Observing your troubles the lotus-like young Bou is become sad.

Nobin. Ah! my sweet-faced, the cruel words which you used struck on my heart like arrows of fire. Our youngest Bou, she is a girl; good clothes and beautiful ornaments are objects of pleasure to her. What understanding has she now? What does she know of family business? As our young Bipin cries when his necklace is taken from him in play, so our youngest Bou weeps when her ornaments are taken away. Oh! oh! Am I formed so mean-spirited a man? Am I to be so cruel a robber? Shall I deceive a young girl? This can never be, as long as life exists.

The worthless Indigo Planters even cannot commit such a crime. My dear, never use such a word before me.

Soirindri. Beloved of my soul, that pain, with which I told these words, is only known to me and the omniscient God. What doubt is there, that they are fiery arrows? They have burst my heart and burnt my tongue, and then having divided the lips, have entered your heart. It is with great pain that I told you to take the ornaments of the youngest Bou. Can there be any pleasure in the mind, after having observed this your insane wandering, this weeping of my father-in-law, the deep sighs of my mother-in-law, the sad face of the youngest Bou, the dejected countenance of relatives and friends, and the sorrowful mournings of the ryots. If by any means we can restore safety, then all shall be safe. My Lord, I do feel the same pain in giving the ornaments of our youngest Bou, as if I had to give those of Bipin, but if I give away the ornaments of Bipin, before giving those of the youngest Bou, that would prove in act of cruelty to her; since, she might think that my sister looks on me as a stranger. Can I give pain to her honest heart by doing this? Is this the work of the elder sister who is like a mother.

Nobin. My dear love! Your heart is very sincere. There is not a second to you in sincerity in the female race. Is this my family reduced to this state! What was I, and what am I now become? The sum of my profits was seven hundred Rupees. I had fifteen warehouses for corn, sixteen bighas of garden land, twenty ploughs and fifty harrows. What great feasts had I at the time of the Puja; the house-filled with men, feasting the Brahmins, gifts to the poor, the feasting of friends and relations, the musical entertainments of the Vaishnabas, and also pleasant theatrical representations. I have expended such large sums, and even given as donation one hundred Rupees. Being so rich, now I am obliged to take away the ornaments of my wife and the wife of my young brother. What affliction! God thou didst give these, and thou hast taken them again. Then, what sorrow?

Soirindri. My dear when I see you weep, my life itself weeps (*tears in her eyes*). Was there so much pain in my fate; am I thus destined to see such distress in my Lord? Do not prevent me any more. (*Takes out the amulet*)

Nobin. My heart bursts when I see your tears (*rubbing the tears*). Stop my dear, of the moon-like face, stop (*taking hold of her hands*). Keep these one day more, let me see.

Soirindri. My dear, what further resource is left? Do as I tell you now. If it be so destined, there shall be many ornaments afterwards (*aside sneezing*); true, true. Aduri is coming.

Enter ADURI *with two letters*

Aduri. I can't say whence the letters came; but my mistress told me to give them to you.

[*Exit* ADURI *after giving the letter*]

Nobin. It shall be known by those letters whether your ornaments are to be taken or not. (*Opens the first letter*)

Soirindri. Read it aloud.

Nobin. (*Reads the letter*)

Dear Friend,

This is to make it known to you, that to give a sum of money to you at present is only to make a return of favours. My mother has taken leave of this world yesterday; and the day of her first funeral obsequies is very near. This have I written yesterday. The tobacco is not yet sold.

"I am, yours,
Ghonosyam Mukherji"

What misfortune is this! Is this my assistance on the funeral obsequies of the honorable Mukherje? Let me see what deadly weapon hast thou brought. (*Opens the letter*)

Soirindri. My dear, it is very miserable to fall into despair after entertaining high hopes. Let the letter as it is.

Nobin. (*Reads the letter*)

Honoured Sir,

I received your last letter, and noted the contents hereof. Be it known to you that your well-being is my well-being. I have already collected the sum of three hundred rupees, and shall take that along with me to you to-morrow. As to the remaining one hundred I shall clear that on the coming month. The great benefit, which you have bestowed on me, excites me to give some interest.

I am your most obdt. servt.
Gokul Krishna Palita

Soirindri. I think God has turned his face towards us, now, let me go, and give this information to our youngest Bou.

[*Exit* SOIRINDRI]

Nobin. (*Aside*) My life [wife] is, as it were, the idol of simplicity; it is a piece of straw in a rapid stream. Let me take my father now to Indrabad, depending on this; as to the future it shall be according to Fate. With me I have one hundred and fifty Rupees. As to the tobacco, if I had kept it for a month more, I would have sold that for the sum of five hundred Rupees; but what can I do? I am obliged to give it for three hundred and fifty Rupees; since I have to pay much for the Officers of the Court; and also heavy expenses for going to and returning from the place. If on account of this false case my father is imprisoned then am I certain that the destruction of this land is very near. What a brutal Act is passed! But, what is the fault of the Act; or of those who passed the Act? What misery can the country suffer if those, who are to carry out the Act, do it with impartiality? Ah, by this Act how many persons are suffering in prison-houses without a fault! It bursts the heart to see the miseries of their wives and children; the pots for boiling rice on the hearths are remaining as they are; the several kinds of grain in their yards are being dried up; their kine in the rooms are all remaining bound in their places; the cultivation of the fields is not fully carried out, the seeds are not sown, and the wild grass in the rice fields is not cut off. What further prospects are there in the present year? All are crying aloud, with the exclamation: "Where is my lord? Where is my father?" Some Magistrates are dispensing justice with proper consideration; in their hands this Act is not be come the rod of death. Ah! had all Magistrates been as just as the Magistrate of Amarnagara is, then could the harrow fall on the ripe grain and the locusts destroy the fields? Had that been the case, would I every have been thrown into so many dangers? O, thou Lieutenant Governor! Hadst thou engaged men of the same good character as thou hadst enacted laws, then the country would never have been miserable. O, thou Governor of the land! hadst thou made such a regulation, that every plaintiff, when his case is proved false, shall be put in prison, then the jail of Amarnagara would have been crowded with Indigo Planters; and they would never have been so very powerful. Our Magistrate is transferred, but our case is to continue here to the end; and that will occasion our ruin.

Enter SABITRI

Sabitri. If you are to give up all the ploughs, is it that even then you are to take the advance-money? Sell all your ploughs and kine, and engage in trade; we shall enjoy ourselves with the profits that shall accrue from that. We can no longer endure this.

Nobin. Mother, I also have the same desire. Only I wait till Bindu is engaged in some service. If we leave off ploughing the land, it will be impossible for us to maintain the family and it is for this reason that we have still, with so much trouble, kept these ploughs.

Sabitri. How shalt thou go with this headache? Oh! Oh! was such Indigo produced in this land! (*Places her hand on Nobin's head*)

Enter REBOTI

Reboti. My mother! Where shall I go! What shall I do? They have done what! Why is it that through ill fortune I brought her. Having brought one who now belongs to another family, I am become unable to preserve propriety. my eldest Babu! Preserve me; my life is on the point of bursting out Bring me Khetromany; bring me my puppet of gold.

Sabitri. What has happened?

Reboti. My Khetromany went to fetch water in the evening from Das's tank along with Panchu's mother: while she was returning through the forest path, four clubmen kidnapped her. That devil of the woman, Podi, was there to point her out and to flee afterwards. Oh, eldest Babu! What a terrible thing I did by bringing down my daughter here! She is now a member of another family! She is carrying. Oh! how I dreamt of celebrating it!

Sabitri. What misfortune! These destroyers can do all things. Ye are taking by force the pieces of ground of men, their grain, their kine and calves. By the force of clubs, ye are cultivating Indigo! and the people are doing your work with cries and sobbings. But what is this—the violation of the modesty of women!

Reboti. My mother! I am preparing the Indigo, taking only half the food. Those bighas which they had marked, on them I worked. When Ray works, he weeps with deep sighs; if he hear of this my work, he would become, as it were, insane.

Nobin. Where is Sadhu now?

Reboti. He is sitting outside, and is weeping.

Nobin. To a woman of good family, constancy in faithfulness to her husband is, as it were, the load-stone; and how very beautiful does she appear (*ramanı kı ramaniya*) when she is decorated with the ornament! Is a woman of a good family carried off, when the Bhima-like [son of] Svaropur of my fathdr is still in existence? At this very moment shall I go. I shall see what manner of injustice there is. The Indigo frog can never sit on the white waterlily-like constancy of a woman.

[*Exit* NOBIN]

Sabıtri. Chastity is the store of gold which is given by Providence; it is so valuable that it makes the beggar woman, queen. If you can rescue this jewel before it is soiled, from the hands of the Indigo monkey, then shall I say that you have actually answered the purpose of my being your mother. Such injustice I never heard of. Now, Ghose Bou, let us go outside.

THIRD ACT—THIRD SCENE.

MR. ROSE'S *Chamber*

MR. ROSE *sitting*

Enter PODI MOYRANI *and* KHETROMANY

Khetro. My aunt, don't speak of such things to me; I can give up my life, but my chastity never; cut me in pieces, burn me in the fire, throw me into the water, and bury me under ground, but as to touching another man that can I never do. What will my husband think?

Podı. Where is your husband now, and where are you! This shall no one know. Within this night, I shall bring you back with me to your mother.

Khetro. Very well the husband may not know it—but God above will know it, and I shall never be able to throw dust in His eyes. Like the fire of the brick-kiln it will still burn within my breast, and the more my husband shall love me for my constancy, the more my soul shall be tortured. Openly or secretly, I never can take a paramour.

Podi. My child, come, come to the Saheb. Whatever you have to say, say to him. To speak to me is like crying in the wilderness.

Planter Rose. To speak to me is throwing pearls at the hog's feet. Ha, ha, ha, we Indigo Planteıs, are become the companions of Death.

Can our Factories remain, if we have pity? By nature, we are not had; our evil disposition has increased by Indigo cultivation. Before, we felt sorrow in beating one man; now, we can beat ten women with the Ramkant (leather strap), making them senseless; and immediately after, we can, with great laughter, take our dinner or supper.

(*Breaking through the window enter* NOBIN *and* TORAPA)

Torapa. I will swim over the stream to my house, this night. What more shalt thou hear of my fate; I broke down the window of the Attorney's stable, and immediately ran off to the Zemindary of Babu Bosonto and then, in the night came to my wife and children. This Planter has stopped every thing; has he left any means for men to live by ploughing? How very terrible are the thrusts of the Indigo? Again, the advice is given to serve for it. Now, Sir, where are your kicks with your shoes on, and your beating on the head? (*Thrusts* ROSE *with his knees*)

Nobin. Torapa, what is the use of beating him? We ought not to be cruel, because they are so; I am going.

[*Exit* NOBIN, *with* KHETROMANY]

Torapa. Do you want to show such ill-usage and bad conduct? Speak to your old father and carry on your business by mutual consent; how long shall your force of hand continue? You shall not be able to do anything, when the ryots shall fly. There is no abuse more horrid than to say Die! When the ryots abscond *en masse* your factory will go to ruins. Just settle our eldest Babu's account of the last year; and take what he consents to sow of Indigo in the present year. It is owing to you that they have fallen into a state of confusion. It is not merely to load one with advances, but cultivation is necessary. Good evening, our young Saheb. Now, I go.

[*Throws* ROSE *about, lying on his back, and flies off.*]

THIRD ACT—FOURTH SCENE.

The Hall in the House of GOLUK BASU

Enter SABITRI

Soirindri. (*With a deep sigh*) O thou cruel Magistrate! why didst not thou also give me a summons? I would have gone to the Zillah with my husband and my child; that would have been far better than remaining

in this desert. Ah! my husband always remains in the house, never goes out to another village even on invitation. Is he destined to suffer so much? The peadahs taking him away, and he himself to go to the jail, Bhagabati, my mother! was there so much in thy mind? Ah, he says that he can never sleep but in a room very long and broad; he eats only the boiled Atapa rice[30]; he takes the food prepared by no other hand but that of the eldest Bou. Ah! he brought blood out of his breast by severe slaps; he made his eyes swollen by tears; and at the same time he took his leave, he said this is my going to the side of the Ganges[31] (*weeps*). Nobin says, Mother, call on Bhagabati. I must return home having gained my object and brig him also. Ah! the face of my son, like unto that of gold, is blackened; what great troubles for the collection of money! Wandering about without rest, his brain is become like a whirlpool. Lest I give away the ornaments of the Bous, my son encourages me, saying, My mother, what want of money? What large sum will be necessary for this case? How did my child grieve, when my ornaments were given in mortgage for our suit on small portions of land, said as soon as I get a mall sum of money, I shall immediately brink back the ornaments. My son has courage in his tongue, and tears in his eyes. My dear Nobin, in this heat of the sun, went to Indrabad; and I, a great sinner, remained confined in my room. Is this the life thy mother should spend?

Enter SOIRINDRI

Soirindri. Madam, it is now too late. Now bathe. It is our unfortunate destiny: else, why shall such an occurrence come to pass?

Sabitri. (*With tears*) No my daughter, as long as my Nobin does not return, I shall never give rice and water to my body. Who shall serve food to my son?

Soirindri. His brother has a lodging house there, and they have a Brahmin cook; there will be no disturbance. You had better come and bathe.

Enter SARALOTA *with a cup of oil*

Young Bou. You had better rub the oil on her body, and make her bathe, and bring her to the cook-room. Let me go to prepare the place.

[*Exit* SOIRINDRI]

(SARALOTA *rubs the oil on her mother-in-law's body*)

Sabitri. My parrot[32] is become silent; my daughter has no more

words in her mouth; she is faded like a stale flower. Ah! Ah! for how long have I not seen Bindhu Madhab? I am waiting in expectation that the College will be closed, and my son will come home. But this danger is come. (*Applying her hand on Saralota's chin*) Ah, the mouth of my dear one is dry, I think you have not yet taken any food. While I have fallen into this danger, when shall I examine, whether any have taken their food or not! Let me bathe, you go, and take some food. I am also going.

[*Exit both*]

FOURTH ACT—FIRST SCENE

The Criminal Court of INDRABAD

Enter MR. WOOD, MR. ROSE, *the Magistrate, and an officer, sitting.* GOLUK CHUNDER, NOBIN MADHAB, BINDHU MADHAB, *the Attorneys of the plaintiff and dependant, the Agent, Nazir, a Bailiff, Servants, Ryots etc. Standing.*

Defendant's Attorney. May the prayer in this application be granted. (*Gives the application to the Sheristadar*).

Magistrate. Very well; read it. (*Speaks with Mr. Wood and laughs*).

Sheristadar. (*To the Defendant's Attorney*) You have written here what equals the length of the Ramayana. Can the petition be read without its being in abstract? (*Turns to another page of the application*)

Magistrate. (*Having spoken with Mr. Wood and concealing his laughter*) Read clearly.

Sheristadar. In the absence of the defendant and his attorneys, the evidence is already taken from the witnesses of the plaintiff. We pray that the witnesses of the plaintiff be again called.

Plaintiff's Attorney. My Lord, it is true that attorneys are given to lying, deceiving and forgery; they easily forge and tell lies, and are incessantly engaged in immoral action. Leaving their wives, they spend their time in the 'blissful abode' of prostitutes. The Zamindars hate the attorneys; but for effecting their special purposes, they call them, and give them to seat on their couch. My Lord, the very profession of the Attorneys is a cheating one. But the Attorneys of the Indigo Planters can never deceive. The Indigo Planters are Christians; falsehood is accounted a great sin in the Christian Religion. Stealing, licentiousness, murder, and other actions of that nature are also looked upon as hateful in that religion. Not only taking evil actions into consideration, even forming evil designs in the mind dooms a man to burn in the fire of hell. The main aim of the Christian Religion is to show kindness, to forgive, to be mild, and to do good unto others; so, it is by no means probable that the Indigo Planters, who follow such a true and pure religion, ever give false evidence. My Lord, we do serve such Indigo Planters; we have reformed our character according to theirs, and even, if we desire, we can, by no means, teach

the witness anything false; since if the Sahebs, the lovers of truth, find the least fault in their servants, they punish them according to the rules of justice. The Amin of the Factory, the witness of the defendant, is an example of that. Because he deprived the ryot of his advances, the kind Saheb drove him from his office; and being angry on account of the cries of the poor ryot, he also beat him severely.

Wood, the Planter. (*To the Magistrate*) Extreme provocation! Extreme provocation!

Plaintiff Attorney. My Lord, many questions were put to my witness; had they been witnesses who were prepared ones (perjured) they would have been caught by those very questions. The lawyers have said, "The judge is as the advocate of the defendant," consequently, the questions to be put by the defendant, are already asked by your Honour. Therefore, there is no probability of any advantage to the defendant, if the witnesses be brought here again; but on the other hand, it will prove very disadvantageous to them. Honoured Sir, the witnesses are poor people who live by holding the plough. By the plough they maintain their wives and children; their fields become ruined if they do not remain there for the whole day; so much so, that because it proves a loss of them if they come home, their wives bring boiled rice and refreshments bound in handkerchiefs to them in the fields and make them eat that. It proves an entire loss to the ryots to come away from the fields for one day; and at such a time, if they be brought to such a distant part of the Zillah by summons, then the labours of the whole year will go for nothing. Honored Sir, Honored Sir, do as you think just.

Magistrate. I don't see any reason for that (*as advised by Mr. Wood*). There seems no necessity for that.

Defendant's Attorney. My Lord, the ryots of no village take the advances of the Indigo Planters with their full consent. The Indigo Planter, accompanied by the Amins and servants, or his Dewan, goes on horse-back to the field, marks off the best pieces of land, and orders the preparations of the Indigo. Then the owner of the land brings the ryots of the Factory, and having made known to them the particulars of the matters, takes their signatures for the advances. The ryots, taking the money in advance, come home with tears in their eyes; and the day on which any of them comes home with the money, his house becomes filled, as it were, with the tears of persons weeping for the death of a

relative or friend. On the payment of the Indigo to the Indigo Planters, even if the latter have something still to pay to the farmers above the sum of the advances as the price of that article, yet they keep it in their Account-books that the farmers have still something to pay. The ryots, when they have once taken the advance, will suffer pain for not less than seven generations. The sorrow, which the ryots endure in the preparation of the Indigo, is known only to themselves and the Great God, the Preserver of the poor. Whenever some sit together, they converse about the advances and inform each other of their respective sums; and also try how to save themselves. They have no necessity for forming plans and mutually taking the advice of each other. Of themselves they are become as mad as the dog who received a blow on the head. The witness gave evidence that the ryots were willing to prepare Indigo, but that the person who has engaged me had, by advice and intimidation, stopped their engaging in the preparation of Indigo. This is a very striking and an evident forgery. Honored Sir, once more bring them before the Bench, and your servant will by two questions disclose the falsity of their evidence. I do acknowledge that Nobin Madhab Bose, the son of Goluk Chunder Bose, who engaged me tried his utmost to extricate the helpless ryots from the hands of the giant-like Indigo Planters. I do acknowledge this. He also proved himself successful in stopping the tyranny of Mr. Wood, which is known fully by the case which was brought here for the burning of the village of Polaspore. But Goluk Chunder Bose is of a very peaceful character; he fears the Indigo Planters more than the tigers, never engages in any quarrels; at no time injures another and even is not courageous enough to save another from danger. My Sahab, that Goluk Chunder Bose is a man of a good character, is known to all persons in the Zillah, and can be known even by enquiring of the Amlas of the Court.

Goluk. Honored Sir, the whole sum due for my Indigo of the last year was not paid; still only through fear of coming into Court, I consented to take the advance for sixty bighas of land. My eldest son said, "Father, we have other ways of living; the loss in Indigo for one year or two might stop feasts and religious ceremonies, but will not produce want of food. But those who entirely depend on their ploughs; what means have they? Losing this case, if we be obliged again to engage in the Indigo cultivation, all will be obliged to do the same afterwards." He said this as a wise man; and consequently I told him to make the Saheb, by entreaties and supplications, to agree to fifty bighas. The Saheb said nothing, neither

Yes nor No; and secretly made preparations to bring me in my old age to gaol. I know that the only way to get happiness is to keep the Sahebs contented; the country is the Saheb's the Judges are their brothers and friends, and is to proper to do anything against them. Extricate me, and I make this promise, that if I cannot prepare the Indigo from want of plough and kine, I will annually give the Saheb Co.'s Rs. 100 in the place of no trade, nor lands for cultivation. This is my whole stock. It is for your sake only that I have agreed to take Rupees 100. Let us go to our lodging. Be careful that the Dewan does not bear this. (Have not they got something as their own.)

[*Exit all*]

FOURTH ACT—SECOND SCENE.

INDRABAD, *The Dwelling of* BINDHU MADHAB

NOBIN MADHAB *and* SADHU *sitting.*

Nobin. I am obliged to go home. My mother will die as soon as she hears of this. What more shall I do now for you? See that our father does not suffer great sorrow. I have now determined on leaving our habitation. I shall sell off everything, and send the money. Whoever wants any sum you will give him that.

Bindhu. The Darogah does not want money; only, for fear of the Magistrate, he does not allow the cooking Brahmin to be taken there.

Nobin. Give him money and also entreat him. Ah! His[33] body is old; he had been without food for three days! I explained to him, and entreated him greatly. He says, "Nobin, let three days pass and then shall I think whether I shall take food or not; within these three days, I shall not take anything."

Bindhu. I do not find any means how I can be able to make my father take some boiled rice. The hand which he has placed on his eyes from the time when the Magistrate, the slave of the Indigo Planters, ordered him to be kept in the prison, that hand he has not yet removed. The hand is filled with the tears; and the place where he was made to sit down at first, is still that where he now is. Being entirely silent, and remaining weak in body and without power to move, he is become like a dead pigeon in this cagelike prison. This day is the fourth, and to-day I must make him take food. You had better go home, and I shall send a letter every day.

Nobin. O God, what great sorrow art thou giving to our father! If they do allow you, my dear Bindhu, to remain day and night in the prison; then can I quietly go to our house.

Sadhu. Let me steal, and you bring me before the court as a thief. I will make the confession; they will put me in prison, then I will be best able to serve my master.

Nobin. O Sadhu, thou art the actual Sadhu (the honest man). Oh! You are now very anxious on learning the deadly illness of Khetromany; and the sooner I can take you home, the better.

Sadhu. (*Deep sigh*) My eldest Babu! Shall I see my daughter on my return? I have none other.

Bindhu. If you make her take that draught which I gave you, she must be cured by that. The Doctor heard every particular of her disease, and gave that medicine.

Enter the Deputy Inspector

D. Inspector. Bindhu Babu, Mr. Commissioner has written very urgently about releasing your father.

Bindhu. There is no doubt the Lieutenant-Governor will grant him release.

Nobin After what time can the notice of the release home?

Bindhu. It will not be more than fifteen days.

D. Inspector. The Deputy Magistrate of Amaranagara gave an order of imprisonment for six months to a certain Mooktyar according to this law, but he had to remain for sixteen days in the gaol.

Nobin. Shall such a time ever come, that the Governor, becoming friendly, will destroy the evil desires of the unfriendly Magistrate?

Bindhu There is a God, the lord of the Universe; and he must do it. Sir, you had better start, for there is a long way to go.

[*Exit* NOBIN, BINDHU *and* SADHU]

D. Inspector. Alas! The two brothers burnt up by these anxieties have, as it were, become dead, while living. The order of release from the Lieutenant-Governor will be as the restoration of life to them. Babu Nobin Chunder is of a brave spirit, does good to others, is very munificent, a great improver of learning, and also of a patriotic mind; but the mist of the cruel Indigo Planters withered all his good qualities in the bud.

Enter the Pundit of the College.

Welcome, Sir!

Pundit. My body is naturally somewhat of a warm nature. I cannot bear the sunshine. The het of the Sun makes me, as it were, mad in the months of March, April and May. I had a very severe headache for a few days; and was not able to attend Bindhu Madhab at all.

D. Inspector. The Vishnu Toila (a kind of oil) can do you some good. The oil is prepared for Babu Vishnu and to-morrow I shall send some to your house.

Pundit. I am much obliged to you for that. A man of a healthy constitution becomes mad by teaching children; such am I.

D. Inspector. Why don't we see our older Pundit any more?

Pundit. He is now trying some means to leave this doggish service. While his good son is making some acquisition of property the family will be maintained like that of a king. It does not seem good for him now to go to and come from the college looking, with his books under his arm, like a bull bound to the cart. He is now of age.

Re-enter BINDHU MADHAB

Bindhu. The Pundit is come.

Pundit. Did the sinful creature show so much injustice? You did not hear it; at Christmas he spent ten days continually in that Factory. The ryot is to have justice from his! Can the Hindu celebrate his religious service before the Kazi (the Mohammedan judge).

Bindhu. The decree of Providence.

Pundit. Whom did you appoint as Mukhtyar?

Bindhu. Pradhan Mullik.

Pundit. Why did you appoint him your Mukhtear? It would have been better if you had engaged some other person. "All gods are equal. To make a separation from the wicked, the village becomes empty."[34]

Bindhu. The Commissioner has made a report to the Government recommending the release of my father.

Pundit. One is ashes and so is the other; as is the Magistrate such is the Commissioner.

Bindhu. Sir, you know not the Commissioner; and therefore, you

spoke thus of him. The Commissioner is very impartial, and is always desirous of the improvement of the natives.

Pundit. Whatever that be; now if through the blessing of God your father be released, then all shall be well. In what condition is he in the gaol?

Bindhu. He is shedding tears day and night, and for the last three days has taken no food. Just now I shall go to the gaol, and shall make him happy by giving him this good news.

Enter a Chaprasi

Art thou a chaprasi of the gaol?

Chaprasi. Sir, come quickly to the gaol. The Darogah has called you.

Bindhu. Have you seen my father this day?

Chaprasi. Come Sir. I cannot say anything.

Bindhu. Come Sir (*to the Pundit*) I don't suppose all good. I go.

[*Exit* BINDHU MADHAB *and Chaprasi*]

Pundit. Yes; let us all go, I think some bad accident has taken place.

[*Exit both*]

FOURTH ACT—THIRD SCENE.

The Prison-house of INDRABAD

The dead body of GOLUK CHUNDER *swinging, bound by his outer garment twisted like a rope; Darogah of Gaol and the Jamadar sitting*

Darogah. Who is gone to call Babu Bindhu Madhab?

Jamadar. Monirodi is gone there. Till the Doctor comes, he cannot bring it down.

Darogah. Did not the Magistrate say he will come here this day?

Jamadar No, Sir, he has four days more to come. At Sachigunge on Saturday, they have a Champagne-party and ladies' dance. Mrs. Wood can never dance with any other but our Saheb; and I saw that when I was a bearer. Mrs. Wood is very kind; through the influence of one letter, she got me the Jamadary of the Jail.

Darogah. Ah! The father of Babu Bindhu Madhab expressed great sorrow at his (father's) not eating food. When Babu Bindhu sees this, he will quit life.

Enter BINDHU MADHAB

All things are by the will of God.

Bindhu. What is this! What is this! Ah! ah! My father is dead while bound above ground with a rope! I was coming to try some means for his release. What sorrow! (*places his own head on the breast of the dead body, then clasps the corpse, and weeps*) On father! Hast thou at once broken the ties of affection towards us? Shalt thou no more praise Bindhu before other men for his English education? Calling Nobin Madhab by the name of "Bhima[35] of Svaropur"; is that now put at an end? You have now at last made your pace with Bipin with whom you have so often quarrelled over the eldest Bou saying: "She is my mother, my mother." Ah, as in the case of a heron and its mate with their young ones flying in the air in search of food, if the heron be killed by a fowler, the mate with her young ones falls into great danger, so shall my mother be when she hears of your being put a death, while hung above ground by a rope.

Darogah. (*Bringing Babu* BINDHU *aside by taking hold of his hands*) Babu Bindhu, do not be so impatient now. Get the permission of the Doctor, and try to take the corpse soon to the Amritaghata.

Enter Deputy Inspector and the Pundit

Bindhu. Darogah, do not speak of anything to me. Whatever consultation you have to make, make that with the Pundit and the Deputy Inspector. Through sorrow, I have lost the power of speech, let me take my father's feet once on my breast. (*Sits up, taking the feet of* GOLUK *on his breast*)

Pundit. (*To the Deputy Inspector*) Let me take Bindhu Madhab on my lap; you better unloose the rope. It is never proper to keep such a godly body in this hell.

Darogah. It will be necessary to wait for a short time.

Pundit. Are you the chowkidar (gate-keeper) of hell, else why have you such a character?

Darogah. Sir, you are wise, you are wrongly reproaching me.

Enter the Doctor

Doctor Ho! Ho! Bindhu Madhab; God's will. The Pundit is come. Bindhu must not leave the College.

Pundit. It is not proper for Bindhu to leave the College.

Bindhu. As to our estates and possessions, we have not everything; at last, our father has left us beggars (*weeps*), how can studying be any more carried on?

Pundit. The Indigo Planters have taken away the all of Bindhu Madhab and his family.

Doctor. I have heard of these planters from the Missionaries and also I have seen them myself. Once as I was coming from a certain Planter's Factory at Matanganagar, while I was sitting in a village, two ryots of the place were passing by the side of my palanquin; one of them had some milk with him, which I wanted to buy. Immediately, one whispered to the other, "The Indigo giant, the Indigo giant." Then having left the milk, they ran off. I asked another ryot, and he said, that these persons ran off for fear of being compelled to take advances for Indigo; and as I ha taken the advance what reason is there for going to his godown. I understood, he took me for a planter; I gave the milk into that ryot's hand, and went away from that place.

D. Inspector. A certain Missionary was passing through a village within the concern of Mr. Vally. As soon as the ryots saw him they began to cry aloud "The Indigo ghost is come out, the Indigo ghost is come out," and having left that path, flew into their own houses. But as the ryots found, by and by, the bounty, mildness, and forgiving temper of these gentlemen, they began to wonder; and as much as the Missionaries showed heartfelt sorrow for the tortures which the poor people suffered from the Indigo Planters, so much the more they began to love them, and to have faith in them. Now the ryots say to each other, "All bamboos are of one tuft but of one is made the frame of Goddess Durga, and of another the sweeper's basket."

Pundit Let us take away the dead body.

Doctor. We must be sharp. You can bring it out.

(BINDHU MADHAB *and the Deputy Inspector loosening the rope, bring out the corpse.*)

[*Exit all*]

FIFTH ACT—First Scene

Before the office of Begunbari Factory

Enter Gopinath Das *and Herdsman.*

Gopi. How did you get so much information?

Cowherd. We are their neighbours; day and night go to their house. Whenever, we are in want of anything, either a little salt or a ladle of oil, we immediately go to them and bring it; if the child cry, we bring a little molasses from them and give it to the child; we are getting our support for nearly seven generations from the Bose family; and can't we get information about them?

Gopi. Where was Bindhu Madhab married?

Cowherd. Oh, it is in a village to the west of Calcutta. In which they wanted to have the Kaistas[36] wear the poita. We cannot satisfy all the Brahmins now in existence in a great feast, and still they wanted to increase the number of the Brahmins. The father-in-law of our young Babu is greatly respected. The Judge or Magistrate, when they come to him, take off their hats. Even the Governor takes off his hat while coming to meet him. Do such men give their daughters to men of these places? Observing the improvements in learning made by our young Babu, they did not care about the village belonging to ryots. People say that the women in cities are showy, and that there is no distinction between them and those who live in the bazzar.[37] But we do not at all find a young woman of a mild temper as the Bou of the Bose family is. The number of Goma goes to their house every day, still, although she has been married for nearly five years, she has never seen her face. We saw her only on that day when she came here. We thought that the Babus in the city keep company with the Europeans; therefore they have brought their females into public like English ladies.

Gopi. But the Bou is always engaged in attending on her mother-in-law.

Cowherd. Dewanji, what shall I say? The mother of Goma says; I heard a report that, had not the youngest Bou been in the house when the news of Goluk Bose being bound by the rope and thus killed came, the mistress of the family would have died. We have heard also that the

women in the city treat their husbands as sheep (slaves) and murder their parents by not giving them any support; but observing this Bou, I now know that it is a mere hearsay.

Gopi. I think, the mother of Babu Nobin Chunder also loves her.

Cowherd. I don't see any one in the world whom she does not love. Ah! She is an Annapurnah[38] (full of rice). But have you kept the rice that she shall be full of it?[39] The vile planters have swallowed up the old man, and they are now on the point of swallowing up the old woman.

Gopi. Thou braggart fool, if the Saheb hear this, he will bring out your new moon.[40]

Cowherd. What can I do? Is it my desire to sit in the Factory and abuse the Saheb? It is you who are drawing the venom out of me.

Gopi. I am very sorry that I have destroyed this man of great honour by a false law-suit. I have also felt great pain hearing of Nobin's severe headache and the mistrable condition of his mother.

Cowherd. It is the cold attacking a frog.[41] Dewanji, don't be angry with me, I am as a mad goat; shall I prepare the tobacco?

Gopi. This stupid-fellow of Nanda's family is very senseless.

Cowherd. The Sahebs are doing all: they themselves are blacksmiths and at the sametime the cimeter; where they make one to fall, there they themselves also fall. If ruin cause upon these Sahebs Factories, then the people of the villages save themselves by bathing.[42]

Gopi. You are very foolish, I don't want to hear any more. Go out, the Saheb will come very soon.

Cowherd. Now, I am going, you must attend to my milk bill, and also give me one rupee to-morrow. We shall go to bathe in the Ganges.

[*Exit Cowherd*]

Gopi. I think the thunder-bolt will strike this head, which is aching. No one will be able to stop the Saheb from sowing the Indigo seed on the sides of your tank. The Sahebs did something improper. These persons engaged themselves to sow Indigo on fifty bighas of land, although they did not get the full price of the last year. Yet the Sahebs are not satisfied; these disputes arose only for certain pieces of ground; and it would have been good for Nobin Bose to have given them these—to keep the goddess[43] Sitala well-pleased is the best. Nobin will bite once more even after his death. (*Seeing the Saheb at a distance*) Here the white bodied

man with a blue dress is coming, I think, I am to remain as a companion (i.e. in prison) with the former Dewan for some days.

Enter MR. WOOD

Wood. There will be a great riot at Matanganagar; and all the latyals will be there. Let no one hear this. For this place, make a collection of ten of the poda caste of spearmen. I, Mr. Rose, and you are to go there. The fool, while he has taken his cacha,[44] will not be able to increase the row greatly. He is sick; then how can he go to bring assistance from the Darogah?

Gopi. The extreme weakness to which these are reduced makes it unnecessary to bring any surkiwalla among the Hindus, for a person to die with a rope round his neck, especially within a prison, is very disgraceful; so he is greatly punished by this occurrence.

Wood. You do not understand this. The rascal is become very happy on the death of his father. He took the advances for a long time only through fear of his father; now that fear is gone, and he will do as he likes. The rascal has given a bad name to my Factory, and I will imprison him tomorrow and keep him along with Mazumder. If the Magistrate be of the same character with him of Amaranagara; the wicked people will be able to do every thing.

Gopi. With respect to what they planned about the case of Mozumdar, I cannot say how very terrible it would have been, had not Nobin Bose fallen into this great danger. I cannot say what they still will do. Moreover, as the Magistrate, who is coming, we have heard, is on the side of the ryots and when he comes to the villages, he brings along with him his tents.—Observing this, we may say, it might occasion great confusion, and also it is somewhat fearful.

Wood. You are always puzzling me with speaking of fear; the Indigo Planters, in nothing whatever, have any fear. If you don't desire it, leave your business, thou great fool!

Gopi. Sir, fear comes on good grounds. When the former Dewan was put in prison, his son came to ask for the last six months' salary of his father. On which you told him to make an application. Then, on his making the application, you again say the salary cannot be given before, the accounts are closed. Honored Sir, is this the judgement on a servant when he is put in prison?

Wood. Did not I know this? Thou stupid, ungrateful creature!

What becomes of your salaries? If you did not devour the price of the Indigo, would there be any deadly commission? Would the poor ryots have gone to the Missionaries with tears in their eyes? You, rascal, have destroyed everything. If the Indigo lessen in quantity, I shall sell your houses and indemnify myself; thou arrant coward, hellish knave!

Gopi. Sir, we are like butcher's dogs; we fill our bellies with the intestines. Had you, Sir, taken the Indigo from the ryots in the very same way as the (Mahajans) *factors* take the corn from their debtors, then the Indigo Factories would never have suffered such disgrace; there would have been not necessity for an overseer and the Khalasis, and the people would never have reproached me with saying. "Cursed Gopi! Cursed Gopi!"

Wood. Thou art blind, thou hast no eyes.

Enter an Umedar (an Apprentice)

I have seen with my own eyes (*applying his hand to his own eyes*) the Mahajans go to the rice-field and quarrel with the ryots (their debtors). Ask this person.

Apprentice. Honored Sir, I can give many examples of that. The ryots say, it is tnrough the grace of the Indigo Planters only that we are preserved from the hands of the Mahajans.

Gopi. (*Aside to the Apprentice*) My child, it is vain flattery. No employment is vacant now. (*To Mr. Wood*) It is true that the Mahajans go to the rice-fields and dispute with the ryots; but if your Honor had been acquainted with the mysterious intention of the Mahajans in going to the fields and raising disputes, you would never have compared with the going of the Mahajans to the fields, the punishment of the poor with Shamchand resembling the tortures with Lakshman the son of Sumitra, suffered by the Sakti-sela,[46]—while they are without food.

Wood. Very well, explain it to me. There must be some reason why thee fools speak to us of everything else; but of the Mahajans they don't say a single word.

Gopi. Honored Sir, these debtors, whatever sum of money they require for the whole year, they take from the Mahajans, and that quantity of rice, which is necessary for them for that time, they also take from their creditors. At the end of the year, the debtors clear their debts either by selling the tobacco, sugar-cane, sesamum, and other things which they have, and then giving the sum collected to their creditors with the interest

on the sum for the time; or by giving those very articles according to the market price: and of the corn which grows, they send to the Mahajans' houses, a part half-prepared. That, which remains, proves sufficient for the expenses of the family for three or four months. If through famine or any improper expenses of the debtors, there fall any arrears in their supplies, the remainder of the debt is carried into the new account-book. Then, by and by, the remainder is filled up. The Mahajans never bring an action against their debtors; consequently the falling into arrears appears to them, as it were, a present loss. I suppose the Mahajans for that reason sometimes go to the fields, observe the tillage and also enquire whether the extent of land for which the debtors have asked the revenue from them, is all cultivated with grains. Some inexperienced persons, taking under false pretences a large sum than is necessary, and thus being burdened with heavy debts, cause losses on the part of the Mahajans and also themselves suffer great troubles. The Mahajans go to the fields for stopping these, and not like "Indigo Giants" (*Strikes his tongue*).[46] Sir, the stupid, shameless Mahajans speak thus.

Wood. I see, Saturn[47] has come upon you to our destruction; else why art thou become so very inquisitive, and why so presumptuous, you stupid, incestuous brute?

Gopi. Sir, we are made to swallow abuse, to submit to shoe-beating, and also we are the men to go to Shrighur[48] (The Prison); should there be a dispensary or school in the Factory you get the credit; should there be murders, we are the men. When I came to you for advice, you, Sir, become angry. That anxiety which I have felt for the law-suit of the Mojumders, is only known to the Lord of all.

Wood. The fool is such, that whenever I tell him to do any action requiring courage, he brings to my ears the law-suit of the Mojumdars. I am saying always that thou art an ignorant fool; why don't you become satisfied with sending Nobin Bose to the Godown of Sochigunge?

Gopi. Thou, Sir, art the parent of this poor man; it would be good, if for the benefit of the poor servant, thou sendest him once to Nobin Bose to ask him about this case.

Wood. Stop, thou upstart of a son. Shall I go to meet a dog for you? You coward son of a Kaista[49] (*throws him down with kicks*). Were you sent as witness to the Commission you would have ruined everything, you, diabolical nigger (*two kicks more*); with such a tongue you shall

do your work like a Caot.[50] You stupid Kaet. Were it not for your work on to-morrow I would send you to the jail.

[*Exit* MR. WOOD *and the Apprentice*]

Gopi. (*Rubbing his body all over and rising up)* A person becomes the Dewan of an Indigo Planter after being born a vulture[51] seven hundred times; else how are numberless kicks dealt by legs wearing stockings digested?[52] Oh! what kickings? Oh the fool is, as it were, the wife (wearing a gown) of a student who is out of College.[53] (*Aside*) Dewan, Dewan.

Gopi. Your servant is present. Whose turn is it?

"In the sea of love are many waves."

[*Exit* GOPI]

FIFTH ACT—SECOND SCENE.

The bedroom of NOBIN BOSE

ADURI *crying when preparing* NOBIN'S *bed*

Aduri. Ah! ah! ah! Where shall I go? My heart is on the point of bursting. They have beaten him so severely that the pulse is moving very slowly; our mistress will die as soon as she sees this. When Nobin was taken by force to the Factory, they were tearing themselves and weeping under the shade of that tree; but when brought towards our house they did not see that.

(*Aside*) We shall take him into the house.

Aduri. Bring him into the house None of them are here.

Enter SADHU *and* TORAPA *bearing the senseless* NOBIN *on their shoulders*

Sadhu. (*Making* NOBIN MADHAB *to lie on the bed*) Madam, where art thou?

Aduri. They began to see standing under the tree. When this person (*pointing to* TORAPA) fled away with him, we thought he was taken to the Factory. They began to tear themselves under the tree. I came to the house to call certain persons. Will our mistress remain alive when she sees this dead son? Do you stand; let me call them here.

[*Exit* ADURI]

Enter the Priest

Priest. Oh God, hast thou killed such a man! Hast thou stopped the provision of so many men! We do not find any such symptom that our eldest Babu sit up again.

Sadhu. God's will. He can give life to a dead man.

Priest. On the third day, Bindhu Babu, according to the sastras celebrated the offering of the funeral cake (pindadan) on the banks of the Ganges; it is through the entreaties of his mother that preparations are being made for the monthly ceremony (Shradh). It was determined that after celebration of the ceremony, their dwelling place is to be removed; and I also heard that they will no more meet with that cruel Saheb; then why did he go there to-day?

Sadhu. Our eldest Babu has no fault, nor has he any want of judgment. Our madam and the eldest Bou forbade him many times. They said, "During the days we are to remain here, we will bathe with the water of the well, or Aduri will bring the water from the tank; we shall have no trouble." The eldest Babu said, "With a present of 50 Rupees, I shall fall at the Saheb's feet, and thus stop the cultivation of the Indigo on the side of the tank: nothing of the dispute in such a dangerous time." With this intention our eldest Babu took me and Torapa with him, and going there with tears in his eyes, said to the Saheb, "Saheb, I bring you a present of 50 Rupees; only for this year, stop the cultivation of the Indigo in this place; and if this be not granted, take the money, and delay that business only till the time when the ceremony is to be performed." Thee is sin even in repeating the answer which the wretch gave, and the hairs of our body stood on an end. The rascal said, "Your father was hung in the jail of the Yabans[54] with thieves and robbers; therefore keep your money for the sacrifice of many bulls which are necessary for his ceremony." Then placing his shoe on one of the eldest Babu's knees, he said, "This is the gift for your father's ceremony."

Priest. Narayan; Narayan[55] (*Placing his hand on his ears*)

Sadhu. Instantly the eyes of the eldest Babu became red like blood, his whole body began to tremble, he bit his lips with his teeth and then remaining silent for a short time, gave the Saheb a hard kick on the breast, so that he fell on the ground upside down like a bundle of bena (certain grass). Kes Dali, who is now the Jamadar of the Factory, and other ten spearmen immediately stood round him. The eldest Babu had

once saved them from a case of robbery in which they were involved; so they felt a little ashamed to raise their hands against him. Mr Wood gave a blow to the Jamadar, took the stick out of his hand and smote with it the head of the eldest Babu. The head was cracked, and he fell down senseless on the ground; I tired much, but was not able to go into that crowd. Torapa was observing this from a distance; and as soon as the men stood round the eldest Babu, he with violence rushed into this crowd like an obstinate buffalo, took him up, and flew off.

Torapa. I was told [by the eldest Babu] "to stand at a distance, lest they take me away by force." The fools hate me very much! Do I hide myself when there is a tumult? If I had gone a little before, I would have brought the Babu safe, and would have sacrificed two of those rascals in the Durgah of Borkat Bibi (the temple of Benediction). My whole body was shrunk on observing the head of the Babu; then, when should I kill these? Oh! Allah! The eldest Babu saved me so many times, but I was not able to save him once. (*Beats his forehead and cries*).

Priest. I see a wound from a weapon on his breast.

Sadhu. As soon as Torapa rushed into the crowd, the young Saheb struck the Babu with the sword. Torapa saved the Babu by placing his own hand, in front of his, which was cut, and there was the sigh of a slight bruish on the Babu's breast.

Priest. (*Deeply thinking for some time, reads*) "Man knows this for certain, that understanding and goodness are necessary in the friend, the wife, and in servant." I do not see a single person in this large house; but a person of a different caste and of another village, is weeping near the Babu. Ah! the poor man is a day-labourer, and his very hand is cut off. Why is his face all daubed over with blood?

Sadhu. When the young Saheb struck his hand with the sword, like an ichneumon making a noise when its tail is cut off, he in agony from the pain of hand flew off after seizing with a bite the nose of the elder Saheb.

Torapa. That nose I have kept with me, and when the Babu will rise up alive again I will show him that (*shows the nose cut off*). Had the Babu been able to fly off himself, I wound have taken his ears; but I would not have killed him, as he is a creature of God.

Priest. Justice is still alive. The Gods were saved from the injustice of Ravana, when the nose of Surpanaka was cut off! Shall not the people

be saved from the tyranny of the Indigo Planters by the cutting off of the elder Saheb's nose?

Torapa. Let me now hide myself inside the barn; I shall fly off in the night. That fool will overturn the whole village on account of his now.

[*Exit* TORAPA *bowing down twice on the earth near* NOBIN MADHAB'S *bed*]

Sadhu. So very weak is our madam become by the death of her husband, that there is no doubt she will die; when she see Babu Nobin in this condition. I applied so much water, rubbed my hand over the head so long; but nothing is bringing him to his senses again. You, Sir, call him once.

Priest. Eldest Babu! Eldest Babu! Nobin Madhab (*with tears in his eyes*) Guardian of ryots? Giver of food! Moving his eyes now. Ah! The mother will die immediately. When she heard of his being bound with ropes above ground, she resolve not to take the rice of this sinful world for ten days. This is the fifth; this morning Nobin Madhab taking hold of her shoulders shed much tears and said, "Mother, if thou dost not take food this day, then I shall never take the rice with clarified butter, thus placing the sin of disobedience to the mother on my head; but shall remain without food." On which the mother kissing her son Nobin, said, "My son, I was a queen, now I become the mother of a king I would never have been sorry, had I once been able to place his feet[56] on my head at the time when he departed this life. Did such a virtuous person die an inauspicious death? It is for this reason that I am remaining without food. Ye are the children of this poor woman; looking on you and Bindhu Madhab, I shall, this day take for my food the orts of our reverend priest. Do not shed your tears before me." Saying so much, she took Nobin Madhab on her lap as if he were a child of five.

[*Aside, cries of sorrow*]

Coming.

Enter SABITRI, SOIRINDRI, SARALOTA, ADURI, REBOTI *the Aunt of* NOBIN *and other women of the neighbourhood.*

There is no fear, he is still alive.

Sabitri. (*Observing* NOBIN *on the point of death*) Nobin Madhab! my son, where art thou? Oh! Alas!

(*Falls senseless*)

Soirindri. (*With tears in her eyes*) Oh young Bou, take hold of your mother-in-law; let me once see the Lord of my life, in the fulness of my heart. (*Sits near the mouth of Nobin*)

Priest. (*To Soirindri*) My daughter, thou art a great lover of thy husband, a woman of constancy; the frame of thy body was created in a good moment. For one who is so entirely devoted to her husband, and who has everything good on her part. Fortune may give life to her husband again; he is moving his eyes, serve him without fear. Sadhu, remain here till our madam be in her senses.

[*Exit Priest*]

Sadhu. Just see and place your hand on her nose. The body is become stiffer than that of a dead person.

Saralota. (*Speaking slowly to Reboti, after placing the hand on her nose*) Her breathing is full, the fie coming out of the head is so very intense that my throat, as it were burns.

Sadhu. Has the Gomastah (*head clerk*) fallen into the hands of the Sahebs while he is gone to bring the physician? Let me go to the lodging-house of that physician.

[*Exit* SADHU]

Soirindri. Ah! Ah! my Lord! That mother for whose abstinence from food thou hast grieved so much; that mother, for whose weakness thou hast served her feet; that mother who for some days was, by no means, able to sleep without placing thee in her lap, that very same dear mother is now lying senseless before thee, and thou art not seeing her once (*seeing Sabitri*). As the cow, losing her young one, wanders about with loud cries, then being bit by a serpent falls down dead on the field, so is the mother lying senseless on the ground being grieved for her son. My lord open thine eyes once more; call thy maidservant[57] once more with thy sweet voice and thus satisfy her ears once. The sun of happiness has set at noon for me; what shall my Bipin do? (*With tears in her eyes falls upon the breast of Nobin Madhab*)

Saralota. Ye who are here take hold of our sister.

Soirindri. (*Rising up*) I became an orphan while very young; it is for this death-like Indigo that my father was taken to the Factory and he returned no more. That place became to him the residence of Yama (*Death*). My poor mother took me to the house of my maternal uncle,

and there through grief for her husband, she bade adieu to the world. My uncles preserved me; I remained like a flower accidentally let fall from the hand of the gardener. My Lord took me up with love and increased my honour. I forgot the sorrow for my parents, and in the life of my husband my parents were, as it were, revived (*deep sigh*). All my griefs are rising up anew in my mind. Ah! If I be deprived of that husband who keeps every thing under the shade of his protection, I shall again become the same helpless orphan.

Nobin's Aunt. (*Raising her with the hands*) What fear my daughter? Why become so full of anxiety? A letter is sent by Bindhu Madhab to bring a doctor. He will be cured when the doctor comes.

Soirindri. My aunt-in-law, while I was a girl. I made a celebration of a certain religious observance; and placing my hands on the Alpana[58] (the white washing prepared for the festival) prayed for these blessings; that my husband be like Rama, my mother-in-law like Kousalya, my father-in-law like Dasaratha, my brother-in-law like Lakshman. My aunt! God gave me more than I prayed for. My husband is as Raghunath (Rama) brave and a provider of his dependants; my mother-in-law is as Kousalya, having a sweet speech and an earnest love for her sons' wives; my father-in-law was always happy in saying *Badhumata, Badhumata*[59] and was the brightener of the ten sides.[60] Bindhu Madhab who surpasses the autumnal moon in purity, is dearer to me than was Lakshmandeva to Sitadevi. My aunt, all has taken place according to my desire; only there is one in which I find some disagreement: I am still alive. Rama is making preparations for going to the forests, but there is no preparation for Sita's going with him.[61] Ah! he was so much grieved on the abstinence of his father; again he took the cacha for the celebration of his funeral ceremony but before that was done he is preparing to go up to heaven (to die). (*looking on his face with a steady sight*) Ah! His lips are dry. Oh my friends and companions, call my Bipin at once from the school; I shall once more (*with seeping eyes*) through his hands pour a little water of the Ganges into his dry mouth. (*Places her mouth on his*)

All (*at once*). Ah! Ah!

Nobin's Aunt. (*Take hold of her body and raises her*) My daughter, do not speak such words now (*weeps*); if my sister were in her senses, her heart would have been burst.

Soirindri. Oh mother, my desire is that my husband be happy in a

future state in the same proportion as he suffered misery in this. My Lord, I, your bond-maid, will pray to God for life; thou wast most virtuous, the doer of great good to others and the supporter of the poor. The Great Lord of the Universe, who provides for the helpless, must give you a place. Ah! take me, my Lord, with thee, that I may supply thee with the flowers for the worship of God. Ah! what loss! what ruin! I see that Rama is going to the wilderness leaving his Sita alone. What shall I do? Where shall I go? And how shall I preserve my life? Oh friend of the distressed, Oh Romanath; Oh Great Wealth of the woman, supply me some means in this distress, and preserve me. I see that Nobin Madhab is now being burnt in the fire of Indigo. Oh, Lord of the distressed! Where is my husband going now, making me unfortunate and without support (*placing her hand on the breast of Nobin, and raising a deep sigh*). The husband now takes leave of his family, having placed all at the feet of God. Oh Lord, thou who art the sea of mercy, the supporter of the helpless, now give safety, now save.

Saralota. Sister, our mother-in-law has opened her eyes; but is looking on me with a distorted countenance. (*Weeping*) My sister, our mother-in-law never turned her face towards me with eyes so full of anger.

Soirindri. Ah! Ah! Our mother-in-law loves Saralota so much, that it is through insensibility only that with such an angry face she had thrown this champa on the burning pot.[62] Oh my sister, do not weep now, when our mother-in-law becomes sensible she will again kiss you and with great affection call you "the mad woman's daughter" (*Sabitri rises up and sits near Nobin, looking steadily on him with certain expression of pleasure*).

Sabitri. There is no pain so excessive as the delivery of a child, but that invaluable wealth which I have brought forth, made me forget all my sorrows on observing its face (*weeping*) Ah! (what a pity) if Madam Sorrow (planter's wife) did not write a letter to Yama (Death) and thus kill my husband, how very much would he have been pleased on seeing this child (*Claps with her hands*).

All (*at one*). Ah! Ah! She is become mad.

Sabitri. Nurse, put the child once more on my lap; let me pacify my burnt limbs. Let me once more kiss it in the name of my husband. (*Kisses Nobin*)

Soirindri. Mother, I am your eldest Bou; do you not see me? Your dear Rama is senseless; he is not able to speak now.

Sabitri. It would speak when it shall first get rice. Ah! Ah! had my husband been living, what great joy! How many musical performances! (*weeps*)

Soirindri. It is misfortune upon misfortune! Is my mother-in-law mad now?

Saralota. Take our mother-in-law from the bed, my sister; let me take care of her.

Sabitri. Did you write such a letter that there is no musical performance on this day of joy? (*Looking on all side and having risen from the bed of force, then going to Saralota*) I do entreat thee, falling at thy feet, madam, to send another letter to Yama, and bring back my husband for once. Thou art the wife of a Saheb: else, I would have fallen at thy feet.

Saralota. My mother-in-law, thou lovest me more than a mother, and such words from your mouth have given me more pain than that of death. (*Taking hold of the two hands of Sabitri*) Observing this your state, my mother, fire is, as it were, raining on my breast.

Sabitri. Thou strumpet, stupid woman, and a Yabana, why dost thou touch me on this eleventh day of the moon?[63] (*Takes off her own hand*)

Saralota. On hearing such words from your mouth I cannot live (*lies down on the ground taking hold of her mother-in-law's feet*) My mother, I shall take leave of this world at your feet. (*Weeps*)

Sabitri. This is god, that the bad woman is dead. My husband is gone to heaven; but thou shalt go to hell. (*Claps with her hand and laughs*).

Soirindri. (*Rising up*) Ah! Ah! Our Saralota is very good natured. Now having heard harsh words from her mother-in-law she is become exceedingly sorry. (*To Sabitri*) Come to me mother.

Sabitri. Nurse, hast thou left the child alone? Let me go there. (*Goes to Nobin hastily, and sits near him*)

Reboti. (*To Sabitri*) Oh my mother! Dost thou call that young Bou a bad woman who, you said, was incomparable in the village and without whose taking food you never took food. My mother, you do not hear my words; we were trained by you, you give us much food.

Sabitri. Come on the Ata Couria[64] of the child, and I shall give you many sweetmeats.

Nobin's Aunt. My sister, Nobin will be alive again; do not be mad.

Sabitri. How did you know this? That name is known to no one. My father-in-law said, when my daughter-in-law gets a child, I shall give it (*if male*) the name "Nobin Madhab". Now the child is born, I shall give it that name. My husband always said, "When shall the child be born, and I shall call him by the name *Nobin Madhab*" (*weeps*). If he had been alive, he would have satisfied that desire on this day. (*Aside a sound*) These, the musicians are coming. (*Clans with her hands*)

Soirindri. Bou, go into that room, the physician is coming.

Enter SADHU CHURN *and the Physician.*

[*Exit* SARALOTA, REBOTI *and all the neighbouring women, and* SOIRINDRI, *putting a veil on her head, stands in one side of the room.*]

Sadhu. Our madam has risen up.

Sabitri. (*Weeps*) Is it because that my husband is not here that you have left your drums at home?

Aduri. She has not understanding; she is become entirely insane. She called that elder Halder "My infant child", and chastised the young Halder's wife, calling her an European's wife. That young woman is weeping severely. Again she is calling you musicians.

Sadhu. So great a misfortune has now come to pass!

Physician. (*Sitting near Nobin*) It is very probable and also according to the Nidana[65] that while she is not taking food for the death of her husband, and while she has seen this miserable condition of her dearest son, she should become thus. It is necessary to see her pulse once. Madam, let me observe thy pulse once. (*Stretches out his hand towards her*)

Sabitri. Thou vile man must be a creature of the Factory, else why dost thou want to take hold of the hand of the woman of a good family? (*Rising up*) Nurse, keep your eyes upon the child; I go to take a little water. I shall give you a silk shari.

Physician. Ah, the light of understanding will not brighten again. I will send the Hima Sagara Toila (*a medicinal oil*) which is now necessary for her. (*Observing the pulse of Nobin*). His pulse is only very weak, but I do not find any other bad symptom. The doctors are ignorant in other

matters, but in anatomical operations they are very expert. The expense will be heavy, but it is of urgent necessary to call one in.

Sadhu. A letter has been sent to the young Babu to come along with a doctor.

Physician. That is very good.

Enter Four Relatives.

First. We never even dreamt that such an accident would come to pass. At noon-day, some were eating, some bathing, and some were going to lie down in their beds after dinner. I heard of it now.

Second. The stroke on the head appears fatal. What ill-fated accident! There was no probability of a quarrel on this day; or else, many of the ryots would have been present.

Sadhu Two hundred ryots with clubs in their hands are crying aloud, "Strike off", "Strike off", and are weeping with these words in their mouths. "Ah! eldest Babu! Ah! eldest Babu!" I told them to go to their own houses, since if the Saheb get the least excuse, he will, on account of the pain in his nose, burn the whole village.

Physician. Now, wash the head and apply turpentine to it, in the evening, I shall come again and try some other means. To make noise in a sick person's room is to increase his disease; so, let there be no noise here.

[*Exit Physician,* SADHU CHURN *and the relatives in one way, and* ADURI, *the other;* SOIRINDRI *sits down*]

The curtain falls.

FIFTH ACT—THIRD SCENE.

The room of SADHU CHURN

On one side, KHETROMANY *in great torment on her bed, and* SADHU *on the other side,* REBOTI, *sitting.*

Khetro. Sweep over my bed; mother, sweep over my bed!

Reboti. My dear, dear daughter, why art thou doing so; I have swept on the bed, there is nothing then on the coat of shreads. I have placed another which your aunt gave.[66]

Khetro. Thorns are pinching me. I die, I die; Oh! turn me to my father's side.

Sadhu. (*Silently turning her to the other side to himself*) This agony is the presage to death. (*Openly*) Daughter, thou art the precious jewel of this poor man; my daughter, take a little food. I have brought some pomegranates from Indrabad, and also the ornamented-shari but you did not at all express your pleasure when you saw that.

Reboti. How very extravagant are my daughter's desires! She said once gave me a flower garland at the time of Semonton. What is that countenance now become? What shall I do! Oh, Oh! Oh! Oh! (*Place her mouth on the mouth of her daughter*). Ah! my Khetro of gold is become a piece of charcoal. Where are the pupils of the eye? See, see.

Sadhu. Khetromany; Khetromany; open your eyes fully my daughter.

Khetro. My mother! My mother! Ah! it is my axe; (*turns on the other side*).[67]

Reboti. Let me take her on my lap; she will remain quiet there. (*Comes to take her on her lap*)

Sadhu. Do not take her up; she will faint.

Reboti Am I so very unfortunate! Ah! Ah! My Harana is as Kartika on his peacock [68] How can I forget him? Dear me! My Siva! (My son!)

Sadhu. Ray Churn is gone a long time ago: he is not yet come.

Reboti. Our eldest Babu preserved her from the grasp of the tiger. Oh! What a kick did that son of a barren woman give on Khetro's belly! There was a miscarriage, and since then my child has been dying minutely, Ah, ah! my grand son was born—a lump of blood—yet it had developed all features—even those tiny fingers, Oh! The young Saheb killed my daughter, and the elder one killed the eldest Babu. Ah! Ah! There is no one to preserve the poor.

Sadhu. What virtuous actions have I done, that I shall see the face of my grand-child?

Khetro. My body is cut off. My waist is pricked by a tangra fish. Ah! Ah!

Reboti. I think the ninth of the moon is closed,[69] my image of gold is to go to the water, and what means shall I have? Who shall call me "Mother! Mother"? Did you bring her for this purpose? (*Taking hold of Sadhu's neck, weeps*).

Sadhu. Be silent, don't weep now, she will faint.

Enter RAY CHURN *and the Physician*

Physician. How is she now? Did you give her that medicine?

Sadhu. The medicine did not act, and whatever went down immediately came up by a vomit. See her pulse once more now; I think, it is a sign of her end.

Reboti. She is crying out, *thorns, thorns.* I have prepared her bed so thickly,[70] still she is tossing about. Now save her by a good medicine. Dear Sir, this relative is very dear unto me.

Sadhu. We don't see any sign of the pulse.

Physician. (*taking hold of the hand*) In this state, it is good for the pulse to bc weak. Weakness makes the pulse strong; to have a strong pulse is fatal.

Sadhu. At this time, it is not same thing, either to apply or not to apply the medicine. The parents have hope to the very end; therefore see, if there by any means.

Physician. The water with which the Atapa (*dried rice*) is washed is now necessary. The application of the Suuchikavaran (*a medicine*) is required.

Sadhu. That Atap which the Barah Ranee sent for offerings of prayer is in the other room. Ray Churn, bring that here.

[*Exit* RAY CHURN]

Reboti. Is Annapurnah[71] now awake, that she shall with the rice in her hands come to my Khetromany? It is through my ill-fate that our mistress is become mad.

Physician. She is already full of sorrow for the death of her husband; again, her son is on the point of death; her insanity is on the increase. I think she shall die before Nobin; she is become very weak.

Sadhu. Sir, how did you find our eldest Babu, to-day? I think, with his pure blood he has extinguished the fire of tyranny of the giants, the Indigo Planters. It is probable, that the Indigo Commission might produce to the ryots some advantages; but what effect has that? If one hundred serpents do bite at once my whole body I can bear that; if on a hearth made of bricks, a fry-pan be placed full of molasses, and the same be boiling by a great fire; I can also bear the torment, if by accident I fall into the pan; if in the dark night of the new-moon a band of robbers with

terrible sounds come upon and kill my son who is honest and very learned, take away all the acquisitions made during the past seven generations, and then make me blind: all these also I can bear; and in the place of one, even if there be ten Indigo Factories in the village, that also I can allow; but to be separated even for a moment from that elder Babu, who is so much the supporter of his dependants that can I never bear.

Physician. The blow through which the brain has oozed out is fatal. I have found the pulse indicate that death is near; either at mid-day or in the evening life will depart. Bipin gave a little water of the Ganges in his mouth, but it came out by its sides Nobin's wife is quite distracted; but she is trying her utmost for his safety.

Sadhu. Ah! Ah! Had our mistress not been insane, her heart would have been burst asunder on seeing this. The doctor has also said, that the bruise on the head is fatal.

Physician. The doctor is a very kind-hearted man. When Babu Bindhu wanted to give money, he said, "Babu Bindhu, the manner in which you are already troubled makes it improbable that the funeral ceremony of your father will be performed. I cannot take anything from you now, and also it is not necessary for you to give money for the bearers who brought me and who will now take me away." Had Dushasan, the doctor, been called he would have taken away the money kept for the ceremony. I have seen that kind of doctors twice; he is as scurrilous as avaricious.

Sadhu. Our young Babu brought along with him the doctor to see Khetromany; but he said nothing with certainty. The doctor, observing my want owing to the tyranny of the Planters, gave me two rupees in the name of Khetromany.

Physician. Had Dushasan, the doctor been called, he would have taken hold of the hand, and said, she would die; and he would have taken the money by selling your kine.

Reboti. I can give money by selling off whatever I have, if they can only cure my Khetro.

Enter RAY CHURN *with the rice*

Physician. Having washed the rice, bring the water here. (*Reboti takes the rice*) Do not give much water. I see the plate is very beautiful.

Reboti. Our mistress (*Sabitri*) went to Gaya, and brought many plates and she gave this to my Khetro. Ah, the same mistress is now turned mad, and her hands are bound with a rope, because she is slapping her cheeks.

Physician. Sadhu, bring the stone-mortor, I have the medicine here. (*Opens his box of medicine*).

Sadhu. Sir, don't bring out your medicine; just see, how her eyes appear. Ray Churn, come here.

Reboti. Oh mother! What is my fate now! Oh mother, how shall I forget the figure of Harana! Oh! Oh! Oh! Khetro, Oh, Khetro! Khetromany; my daughter! wilt thou not speak any more, my daughter? Oh! Oh! Oh! (*weeps*)

Physician. Her end is very near.

Sadhu. Ray Churn, take hold of her, take hold of her (*Sadhu Churn and Ray Churn take Khetromany from the bed, and go outside*)

Reboti. I cannot leave my Lakshmi of gold to float on the water. Where shall I go? Had she lived with the Saheb, that would have been better. I would have remained at rest by seeing her face. My daughter! Oh, Oh, Oh! (*Goes behind Khetro, slapping herself*)

Physician. I die; I die; I die! What pains does the mother bear; it is good not to have a child.

[*Exit all*]

FIFTH ACT—FOURTH SCENE.

The Hall of the House of GOLUK CHUNDER BASU

SABITRI *sitting with the dead body of* NOBIN *on her lap.*

Sabitri. Let me dear child sleep; my dear keeps my heart at rest. When I see the sweet face, I remember that other face[72] (*kisses*). My child is sleeping most soundly. (*Rubs the hand over the head of the corps*). Ah! What have the mosquitos done? What shall I do for the heat? I must not lie down without letting the curtains fall. (*Rubs the hand on the breast of the body*). Ah! Can the mother suffer this, to see the bugs bite the child and let drops of blood come out. No one is here to prepare the bed of the child; how shall I let it lie down? I have no one for me; but all gone with my husband. (*Weeps*) Oh, unfortunate creature that I

am; I am crying with my child here (*observing the face of Nobin*). The child of the sorrowful woman is now making deala[73] (*kissing the mouth*). No. My dear, I have forgotten all distress in seeing thee; I am not weeping (*placing the pap on its mouth*) my dear, suck the pap my dear, suck it. I entreated the bad woman so much, even fell at her feet, still she did not bring my husband for once, he would have gone after settling about the milk of the child. This stupid person has such a friendship with Yama, that if she had written a letter, he would have immediately given him leave (*seeing the rope in her hand*) the husband never gets salvation if on his death the widow still wears ornaments; although I wept with such loud cries, still they made me wear the Shanka.[74] I have burnt it by the lap, still it is in my hands (*cuts off the rope with her teeth*). For a widow to wear ornaments it does not look good and is not tolerable. On my hands there has arisen a blister (*cries*). Whoever has stopped my wearing the Shanka, let her Shanka be taken off within three days[75] (*snaps the joints of her fingers on the ground*). Let me prepare the bed myself (*prepares the bed in fancy*). The mat was not washed (*extends her hands a little*). I can't reach to the pillow; the coat of shreds is become dirty (*rubs the floor with hand*). Let me make the child lie down (*placing the dead body slowly on the ground*). My son, what fear near a mother? You lie down peacefully. I shall spit here (*spits on his breast*). If that Englishman's lady come here this day, I shall kill her by pressing down her neck, I shall never have my child out of my sight. Let me place the bow round it (*gives a mark with her finger round the floor, while reading a certain verse as a sacred formula read to a God*). "The froth of the serpent, the tiger's nose the fire prepared by the Sala's[76] resin, the whistling of the swinging machine, the white hairs of seven co-wives[77] bhanti[78] leaves, the flowers of the dhutura, the seeds of the Indigo, the burnt pepper, the head of the corpse, the root of the madder. the mad dog, the thief's reading of the Chunndi: these together make the arrow to be directed against the gnashing teeth of Yama."

Enter SARALOTA

Saralota. Where are these gone to? Ah! she is turning round the dead body. I think, my husband, tired with excessive travelling has given himself up to sleep, that goddess who is destroyer of all sorrows and pains. Oh, Sleep! how very miraculous is thy greatness, thou makest the widow to be with her husband in this world, thou bringest the traveller to his country; at thy touch, the prisoner's chain breaks; thou art the

Dhannantari[79] of the sick; thou hast no distinction of caste in thy dominions; and thy laws are never different on account of the difference of nations or castes; thou must have made my husband a subject of thy impartial power; or else, how is it, that the insane mother brings away the dead son from him. My husband is become quite distracted by being deprived of his father and his brother. The beauty of his countenance has faded by and by, as the full moon decreases day by day. My mother, when hast thou come up? I have left off food and sleep, and am looking after thee continually, and did I fall into so much insensibility; I promised that I shall bring thy husband from Yama, (invisible) in order to cure thee, and therefore, thou remaindest quiet for some time. In this formidable night, so full of darkness, like unto that which shall take place on the destruction of the Universe; when the skies are spread over with the terrors of the clouds, the flashes of lightning are giving a momentary light, like the arrows of fire, and the race of living creatures are given up, as it were, to the sleep of Death; all are silent; when the only sound is the cry of jackals in the wilderness and the loud noise of the dogs, the great band of enemies to thieves. My mother, how is it possible, that in such a night as this thou wast able to bring thy dead son from outside the house. (*Goes near the corpse*)

Sabitri. I have placed the circle; and why do you come within it?

Saralota. Ah! my husband shall never be able to live on seeing the death of this land-conquering and most dear brother (*Weeps*).

Sabitri. You are envying my child: you all destroying wretch and the daughter of a wretch! Let your husband die. Go out, just now; be out; or else, I shall place my foot on your throat, take out your tongue and kill you immediately.

Saralota. Ah! such Shoranan[80] (*six mouthed*) of gold, whom our father-in-law and mother-in-law had, is now gone into the water.

Sabitri. Don't look on my child; I forbid you—you destroyer of your husband. I see, your death is very near. (*Goes a little towards her*).

Saralota. Ah! how very cruel are the formidable arms of Death? Ah! Yama! You gave so much pain to my honest mother-in-law.

Sabitri. Calling again! Calling again! (*Takes hold of Saralota's neck by her two hands, and throws her down on the ground*). Thou stupid, beloved of Yama! Now will I kill thee (*Stands upon her neck*). Thou hast devoured my husband; again, thou art calling your paramour

to swallow my dear infant. Die, die, die, now! (*Begins to skip upon the neck*).

Saralota. Gah, a, a,! (*death of Saralota*).

Enter BINDHU MADHAB

Bindhu. Oh! She is lying flat here. Oh mother, what is that? Thou hast killed my Saralota (*taking hold of Saralota's head*). My dear Sarala has left this sinful world. (*after weeping, kisses Saralota*)

Sabitri. Gnaw the wretch and destroy her. She was calling Yama to devour my infant; and therefore I killed her. (*standing on her neck*)

Bindhu. As the mother having destroyed the child she was fonding for making it sleep on her lap, on awaking will go to kill herself, so wilt thou, oh my mother! go to kill thyself, if thine insanity passing off, thou canst understand that thy most beloved Saralota was murdered by thee. It will be good if that lamp no more give its light to thee. Ah! how very pleasant it is for a woman to be mad, who has lost her husband and son. The deer-like mind being enclosed within the stone walls of madness can never be attacked by the great tiger, Sorrow. I am thy Bindhu Madhab.

Sabitri. What, what do you say?

Bindhu. Mother, I can no longer keep my life, becoming mad by the death of my father bound by the rope, and the death of my elder brother; thou hast destroyed my Saralota and thus hast applied salt to my wounded heart.

Sabitri. What! Is my Nobin dead! Is my Nobin dead! Ah, my dear son, my dear Bindhu Madhab! Have I killed my young Bou by becoming mad (*embracing the dead body of Saralota*). I would have remained alive, although deprived of my husband and my son, Ah, but on murdering you by my own hands, my heart is on the point of being burnt. Oh, Oh Mother (*Embracing Saralota, she falls down dead on the ground*).

Bindhu. (*Placing his hands on Sabitri's body*) What I said, took place actually. My mother dies on recovering her understanding. What affliction! My mother will no more take me on her lap, and kiss me. Oh mother! The word *ma ma* will no more come out of my mouth, (*weeps*). Let me place the dust of her feet on my head (*takes the dust from her feet and places that on his own hand*). Let me also purify my body by eating that dust. (*East the dust of her feet*).

Enter SOIRINDRI

Soirindri. I am going to die with my husband; do not oppose me, my brother-in-law! My Bipin shall live happily with Saralota. What's this? Why are our mother-in-law and Bou both lying in this manner?

Bindhu. Oh eldest Bou! our mother first killed Saralota, then getting her understanding again, she fell into such excess of sorrow, that she also died.

Soirindri. Now! In what manner? What loss! What is this! What is this! Ah! Ah! my sister, thou hast not yet worn that most pleasant lock of hair on the head which I prepared for thee! Ah! Ah! thou shalt no more call me, 'sister' (*cries*). Mother-in-law, thou art gone to your Rama, but did not let me go there. Oh my mother-in-law, when I got thee, I did not for a moment remember my mother.

Enter ADURI

Aduri. Oh eldest Haldarni, come soon; the young Bipin as afraid.

Soirindri. Why did you not call me thence? You left him there alone. (*Goes out hastily with Aduri*).

Bindhu. My Bipin now the pole-star in the ocean of dangers! (*with a deep sigh*). In this world of short existence, human life is as the bank of a river which has a most violent course and the greatest depth. How very beautiful are the banks, the fields covered over with new grass, most pleasant to the view, the trees full of branches newly coming out; in some places the kine feeding with their young ones. To walk about in such a place enjoying the sweet songs of the beautiful birds, and the charming gale full of the sweet smell of flowers, only wraps the mind in the contemplation of that Being who is full of pleasure. Accidentally a hole small as a line observed in the field, and immediately that most pleasant bank falls down into the stream. How very sorrowful! The Basu family of Svaropur is destroyed by Indigo, the great destroyer of honour. How very terrible are the arms of Indigo!

The Cobra decapello, like the Indigo Planters, with mouths full of poison, threw all happiness into the flame of fire. The father, through injustice, died in the prison; the elder brother in the Indigo-field, and the mother, being insane through grief for her husband and son, murdered with her own hands a most honest woman. Getting her understanding again, and observing my sorrow, the ocean of grief again swelled in her.

With that disease of sorrow came the poison of want; and thus without attending to consolation, she also departed this life. Cessantly do I call: Where is my father? Where is my father? Embrace me once more with a smiling face. Crying out, Oh mother! Oh mother! I look on all sides; but that countenance of joy do I find nowhere. When I used to call, *ma ma*, she immediately took me on her breast, and rubbed my mouth. Who knows the greatness of maternal affection? The cry of *ma, ma, ma, ma,* do I make in the battle-fields and the wilderness whenever fear arises in the mind. Oh my brother, dear unto the heart, in the place of whom there is not one as a friend in this world! Thy Bindhu Madhab is come! Open thine eyes once more and see. Ah! ah! it bursts my heart not to know where my heart's Sarala is gone to. The most beautiful, wise, and entirely devoted to me—she walked as the swan,[81] and her eyes were handsome as those of the deer. With a smiling face and with the sweetest voice thou didst read to me the Betal. The mind was charmed by thy sweet reading which was as the singing of the bird in the forest. Thou, Sarala, hadst a most beauteous face, and didst brighten the lake of my heart. Who did take away my lotus with a cruel heart? The beautiful lake became dark. The world, I look upon, is as a desert full of corpses, while I have lost my father, my mother, brother and my wife.

Ah! Where are they gone to in search of the dead body of my brother? I am to prepare for going to the Ganges as soon as they come. Ah! how very terrible, the last scene of the drama of the lion-like Nobin Madhab is? (*Sits down, taking hold of Sabitri's feet*).

(The Curtain Falls Down)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

1. Shamchand is an instrument made of leather, used by the Planters for beating the ryots.
2. The lines in big types were in plain types in the original. We have used a prominent type to show the main charge brought against the Rev. Mr. Long by Mr. Brett, editor of Englishman. K.B.
3. The Mahomedans and all other nations who are not Hindus, are called by that name.
4. Here the word is used sarcastically and is taken to mean the brother of the wife.
5. The name of beautiful yellow flower.
6. There is a play here on the words Dadan and Gadan.
7 An instrument made use of for breaking down buildings.
8. Yama is Death, the King of terror.
9. This is a term whichis applied to one's son's wife; but sometimes, though rarely it means wife.
10. This is only a quotation, explaining, by an example, the eagerness of the mind when the desire is once excited.
11. This pronoun "his" refers to the husband of Saralota.
12. This is a Bengali term signifying sometimes right and sometimes a witch.
13. The word Rajah is here pronounced in an odd form; and it has reference to these rajahs who were against widow marriage. As the word is pronounced by a woman of lower class, it is spelt here incorrectly.
14. The iron circlet worn by a woman on her left hand, is the mark or sign of the husband being alive.
15. Referring to Khetormani.

16. Referring to Podi Moyrani (sweet-meat-maker).
17. A dunda is equal to 24 English minutes.
18. Belata means England.
19. This refers to a certain practice in India of the Bridegroom going to the houses of relatives amid great feasting, before the celebration of the marriage.
20. These are all words used by Mahomedans in time of great alarm; and here it is used to express the fear of ghosts.
21. It is very like Shamchand.
22. Referring to Soirindri, the wife of Nobin Madhab.
23. This expression "striking the axe on my feet" signifies ruining my self.
24. That is, had the intrigue used by Ray not been detected, it would have proved very advantageous.
25. All these signify that let death come upon thee.
26. The word "you" refers to the Indigo planters.
27. This number five, here referred to, are the persons whom he was trying to bring on his side for the law-suit.
28. This expression "had been hanged for six months" is only used sacastieally.
29. That is as the deer feels disquieted when exposed in *Volcano* so as my mate troubled by the many anxieties in my mind.
30. When the rice is cleansed from its husks by being placed in the sun, instead of being boiled, it is called the Atapa rice.
31. That is, this is his leave.
32. The word parrot here refers to Saralota. As the parrot is generally an object of fondness to persons, so Saralota was called a parrot, because she was much loved by her mother-in-law.
33. This pronoun refers to the father of Nabin.

34. This is a proverb, signifying you cannot separate the tares from wheat.

35. Bhima or Brikadar was the second brother of Yudhistira and the second son of Pandu.

36. The writerclass among the Natives of this country.

37. Signifying the distinction between the women of a good and that of a licentious character.

38. This is one of the names of Durga, meaning the goddess of plenty.

39. Signifying, have you not taken away her whole possession? Then, how can she show her pity by supporting the poor?

40. That is, he will make everything done to you, as at the time of the new moon. In short, he will kill you.

41. That is, nothing: as the cold has no effect on the frog.

42. That is, purify themselves by bathing.

43. Sitola is the goddess of the small-pox; and the meaning of the above is that if that goddess be kept satisfied, the disease of the small-pox cannot come; and if come will pass away.

44. This refers to Nobin Bose. The *cacha* signifies the pieces of cloth kept by the sons on the death of their parents for one month, when the pinda or offering to the dead is made.

45. Lakhman was the brother of Rama, when they were gone to make war with Ravana of Lunka (Ceylon) in a certain battle Lakhman suffered very much by the sacti-sela (the name of a superior engine in a battle).

46. This is sign of shame or fear.

47. The planet Saturn is said to have a very bad influence. Whenever it comes upon one, the utter ruin of that person is through very near.

48. Ironically, the house of prosperity.

49. The Kaistha is the caste of writers.

50. Caot is the name of a mean caste, and the word kaet is only a common form of expression for the term kaistha.

51. The value is taken for a detestable bird.

52. Signifying, else how can he bear so many kicking.

53. This is said only in reference to his dress.

54. This term yabana has reference to the Mahomedans, the Europeans.

55. The name of Vishnu, God.

56. This pronoun "his" stands for Goluk Chunder, the father of Nobin Madhab.

57. The term maid-servant here refers to Soirindri, the wife of Nobin Madhab.

58. It is a general custom in this country to apply the alpana on the floor nearly in all religious observances.

59. This term signifies the wife of one's son.

60. This expression "the brighener of the ten sides" signifies that he did good wherever he went. The ten sides are the north, south, east, west, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west, the top and the under sides.

61. The reference here is to the wanderings of Rama in the wilderness of the Deccan. The signification of the original is that while the husband Nobin is on the point of death, there is no preparation for his wife to die with him.

62. That is she had expressed so much anger against her; or as the original, thrown her into the burning-pot of disgust and hatred. The Champa is the name of a fragrant yellow flower.

63. This day is kept sacred by the widows of this country.

64. A ceremony performed on the eighth day after the birth for securing its good fortune.

65. A treatise on the science of medicine.

66. Reboti says my daughter, what is it that gives you so much pain. There is all over cleared, there is nothing that can trouble the body.

67. There are words which are expressed through great grief.

68. Kartika is taken to be the most lovely in appearance among the Gods—the symbol of male beauty. He is the son of Siva and Doorgah.

69. Here, the reference is to the last of the three days in which the Goddess Doorgah is worshipped; and the last day is taken to be one of great pain, because on that day she is to take her departure from her parents to go to her husband Siva.

70. Thickly prepared signifies many coverings of the bed placed one above an other.

71. It is one of the names of Doorgah. The term signifies "full of rice", or the Goddess of plenty.

72. The face of her husband.

73. It sometimes happens, that during sleep the child either cries or laughs; that is called, the Deala of the child.

74. An ornament made of shell for the wrists of women.

75. That is, let her became a widow within three days, who has made me so.

76. The Sala is the native of the tree shorea robusta.

77. The wives of the same husband.

78. Volkmeria odorata.

79. Dhanantari is the physician of the Gods.

80. Shoranan is one of the names of Kartikeya. In this places it refers to Nobin Madhab on account of the great honour which he had acquired from the people of the country; and he is compared with Kartikeya, because he had much honour among the gods.

81. The gait of the swan is considered in this country the most beautiful model of the motion of the feet.

তৃতীয় ভাগ

HISTORY OF INDIGO DISTURBANCE IN BENGAL

With full Report of the

NILDURPAN CASE



শ্রীললিত চন্দ্র মিত্র।

শিল্পী—

দ্বাদশবর্ষীয় ভাস্কর মিত্র

HISTORY

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BENGAL

WITH

A FULL REPORT OF

THE NIL DURPAN CASE.

COMPILED BY

LALIT CHANDRA MITRA M. A.

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N. B.-- Unfortunately there are some printing mistakes, but these are so patent that they need not be mentioned separately. Of them three are misleading and they have been corrected below.

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5	35	V	VI
98	foot note	47	7
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TO

The Sacred Memory

OF

DINOBANDHU MITRA

Rai Bahadur,

THESE PAGES

ARE DEDICATED BY

HIS SON

LALIT CHANDRA MITRA

PREFACE

The Hon'ble Mr. C. E. Buckland C. I. E. in his excellent book "Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors", has described, what he calls the 'Indigo Disturbances' in Bengal, in a few pages. These gave me the first incentive to compile a fuller history of the subject. I take this opportunity of acknowledging my gratitude to the Hon'ble gentleman both for the title of the Book and the preliminary materials. Since then I have collected other materials which throw light on the subject in its three-fold aspects. These consist in the policy of the Government and the complaints of the ryots and the Indigo Planters respectively. The Books, Pamphlets and Periodicals consulted may accordingly be grouped thus :–

I. (a) "Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal No. XXXIII. Parts I, II and III. —Papers relating to Indigo Cultivation in Bengal".

(b) Report of the Indigo Commission.

II. (a) Volumes of the *Hindoo Patriot* for 1861 and 1862.

(b) *"Strike But Hear"*.

III. (a) Volume of the *Bengal Hurkaru* for 1861,

(b) *Brahmins and Pariahs*.

Incidentally I have looked into other books and these have been mentioned in proper places. The

Report of the *Nil Durpan Case* has been taken from the *Bengal Hurkaru* with slight changes of arrangement to keep up continuity of narration.

I am greatly obliged to my most esteemed friend Babu Mohini Mohan Chatterjee, M. A., B. L., Attorney-at-Law, for having gone through these pages in proof, and helping me with his corrections.

My object in the present publication is not to rake up an old quarrel, but to lay before the public a more detailed account of an important Chapter in the History of Bengal already broached by a Government Officer of the exalted position of the Hon'ble Mr. C. E. Buckland. How far I have succeeded in my humble attempt, I leave it to the public to judge.

The "Dina Dham."
Calcutta.
March 31st 1903

LALIT CHANDRA MITRA.

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APPENDIX

INDIGO DISTURBANCE IN BENGAL

CHAPTER I

EARLY HISTORY

It is difficult to fix the date when indigo was first cultivated in India, but it appears from records –

> "Indigo, from the earliest ages, has been well known as an indigenous product of India. Brought thence to Europe, as a favourite dye and prized article of Commerce, it derived, according to ancient classic authors, its name of *Indicum*, from the country in which it grew."

It further appears that –

> "In the year 1600, Indigo was the main staple by which the East India Company made their profits, and that for many years they fostered the trade and made it what it is; at one period it was found to grow better in the West Indies; and after carrying on the trade for a century, the East India Company gave up Indigo as an article of Investment in favour of the West India Colonies; but in the West Indies it was found to be less profitable than other crops, and was given up and again taken up by the East India Company who having lost £ 80,000 in the year 1779 by contract, magnanimously made it over to their servants and to private traders. The East India Agents being unable to advance money to enable the settlers to carry on the trade, the East India Company therefore with a view of fostering and encouraging the cultivation of indigo in India, advanced to the Indigo planters at various times no less than a million of money. It is to their special protection that the trade in Indigo is to be attributed and not to private capitalists."

But no sooner did the cultivation of indigo by private capitalists, in the interior of the country, commence than acts of violence were resorted to. Sir Ashley Eden in his evidence before the Indigo Commission gave a list of heinous cases, connected with the cultivation, which occurred previous to the year 1810. Sir John Peter Grant also writes to show the early oppression of the planters.

"In the year 1810, the licenses granted to four planters to reside in the interior of the country were withdrawn, on account of the severe ill-usage of the natives, proved against them; and the Governor-General-in-Council found it necessary to issue a Circular in that year, of date the 13th of July, from which the following is an extract :–

The attention of Government has recently been attracted in a particular manner, to abuses and oppressions committed by Europeans, who are established as indigo-palnters in different parts of the country. Numerous as those abuses and oppressions have latterly been, the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General-in-Council, is still willing to hope that this imputation does not attach to the characters of the indigo-planters generally, considered as a body or class of people. The facts, however, which have recently been established against some individuals of that class before the Magistrates, and the Supreme Court of Judicature, are of so flagrant a nature, that the Governor-General-in-Council considers it an act of indispensible public duty to adopt such measures as appear to him, under existing circumstances, best calculated to prevent the repetition of offences equally injurious to the English character and to the peace and happiness of our native subjects.

The offences to which the following remarks refer, and which have been established beyond all doubt or dispute against individual indigo-planter, may be reduced to the following heads :

1st, —Acts of violence, which, although they amount not in the legal sense of the word to murder, have occasioned the death of natives.

2nd, —The illegal detention of natives in confinement, especially in stocks, with a view to recovery of balances alleged to be due from them or for other causes.

3rd, —Assembling in a tumultuary manner, the people attached to their respective factories, and others, and engaging in violent affrays with other indigo-planters.

4th, —Illicit infliction of punishment, by means of a *rattan* or otherwise, on the cultivators or other natives."

The Magistrates were directed by the same Circular to cause stocks kept by planters to be destroyed; to report to Government cases of illegal corporal punishment, not sufficient to warrant a commitment, to the Supreme Court; and to impress on all Europeans who wished to con-

tinue to reside in the country, the necessity of abstaining from illtreatment of the people.

In a subsequent Circular, of the 22nd of July 1810, Magistrates were directed to report all proved instances of planters who were convicted of "obliging the *raiyats* who reside in the vicinity of their respective factories to receive advances, and of adopting other illicit and improper means to compel them to cultivate indigo"; the Governor-General-in-Council observing that he had reason to believe that this was a "habit" of the planters."

Lord Macaulay observed with reference to the early oppression as follows :–

> "That great evils exist, that great injustice is frequently committed, that many ryots have been brought, partly by the operation of the law, and partly by acts committed in defiance of the law, into a state not very far removed from that of predial slavery, is I fear, too certain."

It is, thus, a painful to observe that notwithstanding the fostering care of the benevolent Government, that "habit" continued for nearly half a century and the fourfold catalogue of crimes was only supplemented by the addition of others of a more heinous nature.

Mr. E. De-Latour of the Bengal Civil Service who was Magistrate of Furridpore in 1848, said before the Commission –

> "There is one thing more I wish to state; that considerable odium has been thrown on the Missionaries for saying that – "not a chest of indigo reached England without being stained with human blood." That has been stated to be an anecdote. That expression is mine, and I adopt it in the fullest, and broadest sense of its meaning, as the result of my experience as Magistrate in the Fureedpore district. I have seen several ryots sent into me as a Magistrate, who have been speared through the body. I have had ryots before me who have been shot down by Mr. Forde (a planter). I have put on record, how others have been first speared and then kidnapped; and such a system of carrying on indigo, I consider to be a system of blood-shed."

Before proceeding any further with the tale of misery, we describe here, in the words of the Report of the Indigo Commision, the systems

of cultivation that were prevalent in Bengal –

"The indigo cultivation may be classified under two great heads, the *nij-abad* and the *ryotti*. The former of "own cultivation" may be likened in some respects, to a home farm, managed by the proprietor of an estate in England. It is carried on, on lands of which the factory or Concern has acquired the tenant right, or the right of actual occupancy, by an establishment of ploughs, bullocks and servants, maintained at the planter's expense. Occasionally ploughs and bullocks are hired for the purpose when the establishment kept at the factory may not be sufficient.

The *ryotti* cultivation, on the other hand, as the very name implies, is carried on by ryots on their own lands, under contract and by advances made by the planter. And the *ryotti* again is further divided into cultivation of two kinds, one carried on in villages or estate of which the planter has acquired temporarily or permanently the rights of the zaminder or talookdar, and the other in villages belonging to other parties. These two kinds are familiarly known under the names of *ilaka* and *be-ilaka*. In Bengal Proper, the ryots, as before observed are of two classes, those resident on estates held by the Concern and those who are not. The contracts, which all the ryots enter into, are either for one year, or vary from three to five or ten years. The advances, made in October and November, are invariably at the rate of two rupees a beegah, and for this sum, the ryot usually agrees to give land suited for indigo, which lands would be marked off by the servants of the factory, to prepare them, to sow the indigo, weed it, and deliver the plant at the factory. The plant, when grown and delivered is measured, and credit is given to the ryot at a rate which now ranges from 4 to 6 or 8 bundles for the rupee. The bundles are measured by a six-feet chain passed round the centre of the plant. An acknowledgment is given to the ryot at the time of measurement, or some few days afterwards, and at the close of the manufacturing season, in August or September, the accounts are drawn out, and in October the ryot attends at the factory for the adjustment of the same. To his debit are set down the advances made to him at Rs. 2 a beegah, the value of the stamp on which the contract is engrossed, usually two annas, the seed from 4 to 5 seers, which is usually charged for at four annas a beegah, though it costs more than this sum to the planter; the expense of carting the plant, and after first year's engagements, the amount of any previous debt remaining uncleared. To his credit is placed the value of the bundles delivered by him; and a balance is thus struck. If he has *fazil*

or excess to receive, he has it paid down; if otherwise the debt remains against him, and he receives advances for the next season's operations, not at the full amount of the lands for which he has engaged, but with a deduction in proportion to his debts. In some instances, if the debt is very large, he receives no fresh advances, though he may receive a separate loan to aid him in his difficulties or the debt may be reduced or cleared off, by the voluntary act of the planter. The same process is repeated year after year in the case, both of ryots resident in the estates of others, and of ryots of estates attached to the factory. With some local distinctions, and with certain other defects or exaggerations, forming sources of complaint, and with of course, a great deal depending on the temper, experience and management of the planter himself, the above are the main features of *ryotti* cultivation in Lower Bengal, and as a general statement, we believe it to be accurate and unquestionable. We may state here that the average return of a beegah is about 10 to 12 bundles and that a thousand boundles of plant give on an average about five maunds of dye."

The effect of the cultivations upon the ryot has been described in the Report in the following paragraphs.

"We think it absolutely essential, for a right understanding of the whole subject, to draw His Honour's special attention to this fact – a fact no to be disputed or questioned, that the cultivation of indigo is *not profitable* to the ryot on the terms heretofore existing."

"We feel that it is incumbent on us first to place in the strongest and clearest light, the ryot, as he appears to us, *deprived of his free will* and bound to continue a cultivation, which does not give him a fair or adequate profit, which in its worst aspect he absolutely dislikes, and in its most favourable aspect he is only induced to tolerate. All the defects of the system, inherent and incidental, all the faults which justly are laid at the door either of planter or ryot by their respective opponents, may be traced originally to one bare fact, *the want of adequate remuneration.*"

Having detailed the systems of cultivation, we shall now sketch the legislative history in connection with the *contract* which was the keystone of the whole fabric. The planters maintained that their interest imperatively demanded special protection and they were clamorous for a law to punish criminally a breach of contract by one party and one

party alone, to a commercial bargain. In 1811 the Government of Lord Minto declared :–

> "That it could not discern the necessity for concerting the remedy, already opened to the Indigo Manufacturer, of a suit in the Civil Court, into a criminal prosecution."

The planters, however, were not idle. Regulation V of 1823 was designed to protect a person, who had advanced indigo seed or capital only for purpose of its cultivation in a defined parcel of land, by giving him a lien and interest in the land, and declaring him entitled to avail himself of a certain process for the protection of his interest. The planters were still more successful in 1830, for the Regulation V of that year made ryots who broke indigo contracts, liable to prosecution and penal consequences in the Magistrate's Court, as for a misdemeanour. This obnoxious legislation was allowed to disfigure the Statue Book till 1835, when the question of indigo contracts was submitted to the Law Commissioners. Lord Macualay in his minute of 1835 writes –

> "The regulation which gave to the indigo-planters who had made advances to a ryot, a lien on the indigo crop seems to me highly objectionable in principle. On the whole I am not satisfied that any peculiar system of law is required for the indigo districts. I believe that the evils which exist in those districts differ little either in kind or in degree from those which may be found in almost every part of our Indian Empire. There is a bad judicial system. There is a bad police. There is a people accustomed for ages to be plundered and trampled upon, and ready to cringe before every resolute and energetic oppressor. I have no doubt that Government can do very much to remove these evils. When a good system of law and police is established, when justice is administered cheaply and purely, when idle technicalities and unreasonable rules of evidence no longer obstruct the search after truth, a great change for the better may be expected to take place. This is all that we can do directly. But by doing this we shall indirectly produce a great effect on the national character. The people of India will learn to place confidence in the administration of justice. They will find that they can safely stand up for their rights. They will appeal fearlessly to our Courts, against the tyranny of the rich and powerful."

The Court of Directors also in their despatch No. 3 of 1832, refused

to sanction any legislative measure so framed as not to extend equal protection to all. In the same despatch they directed the repeal of the objectionable clauses of the Regulation V of 1830. The Law was repealed, much to the discontent of the planters, in 1835 by Act. XVI of the same year. The planters, however, kept the ball rolling, and their further attempts in this direction are thus noted by the Hon'ble Mr. Buckland in his 'Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors.'

> "In the years 1854-55 a proposal to re-enact Sections II and III of Regulation V of 1830, for the purpose of enforcing the execution of contracts relating to the cultivation and delivery of the indigo plant was much discussed, but no special legislation was thought to be necessary."

We shall have to revert to this point later in connection with Act XI of 1860.

It has already been described that *Contracts* were entered into by the planters and ryots, Now the first principles of the law of contract require. that both the parties entering into a contract must be *free agents*, otherwise no legal contract can take place. How far the ryots were free agents in these contracts – remains to be discussed. Lord Macaulay in his minute already mentioned, says :-

> "But, it is said, these contracts are not freely made. Force and deception are employed. The peasant assents to disadvantageous terms from fear of bludgeon-men, or is tricked into signing some paper which he does not understand. I answer that in all such cases there ought to be a remedy. The law, I apprehend, would even now reach these oppressive and fraudulent practices. If not, the law ought to be altered. In every case of coercion or deception, the contract should be set aside, and the tyrannical or dishonest capitalist should be punished with examplary severity."

Lord Macaulay wrote this in 1835, but the law hardly ever reached the fraudulent and oppressive practices till the outbreak of 1859-60.

Mr. F. L. Beaufort C.S., who was then Legal Remembrancer admitted before the Commission –

> "In practice, I believe, that these contracts are supposed to descend from father to son, but of course such an idea would not be allowed in any Court. Practically I have no doubt the planter holds such inheritance

of liability in *terrorem* over the ryot."

The English Poet has sung of 'Freedom's battle once begun bequeathed from bleeding sire to son' -- but it was reserved for his countrymen in the East to show that serfdom's contract, once enforced, was also bequeathed from bleeding sire to son.

Sir Ashley Eden in his evidence emphatically says –

> "My opinion is, that in no instances within the last six years, at least, have ryots entered into *legal contracts* for the cultivation of this crop, and that with the exception of Factories which have a large extent of *chur* lands cultivated, the indigo cultivation is in no instance the result of free agency, but that it is always compulsory."

and adduced the following reasons in support of his opinions :–

> "First, I believe it to be unprofitable and, therefore, I cannot believe that any ryot would consent to take up that cultivation, involving as it does serious pecuniary loss to himself; secondly; it involves an amount of harassing interference to which no free agent would subject himself; thirdly, from a consideration of the acts of violence to which the planters have throughout been compelled to resort to keep up this cultivation as proved by the Criminal Records of Bengal; fourthly, from the admissions of the planters themselves that if the ryots were free agents, they would not cultivate Indigo, fifthly, the necessity under which the planters state themselves to be of spending large sums in the purchase of Zemindaries and other descriptions of rights, giving them territorial influence and powers of compulsion, without which they would be unable to procure the cultivation of Indigo; sixthly, the statements of ryots and people generally in the district in which I have been; seventhly, the fact, as soon as the riots became aware of the fact that they were by law and practically free agents they at once refused to continue the cultivation."

Recourse was never had to greater sham than what was practiced in relation to indigo contracts; the engine of compulsion was ever set at work against the ignorant ryots. They were in constant dread of the planter's oppression which, like the Sword of Damocles, was hanging over them. In such a perturbed state of mind, they were hardly competent to exercise any rights possessed by them. Accordingly, the ryots were generally in the dark on the question of free agency. But as soon as they began to realise that the planters were no more at liberty to force on

them advances then they were rejecting them, cases of refusal to sow Indigo commenced to occur.

We shall now describe the steps which led to such refusals. The first important case of refusal seems to have taken place in Barasat, which was, then a Suburban District. As far back as 1855 Mr. R. L. Mangles, the then Magistrate of Barasat expressed an opinion in certain cases connected with the cultivation of Indigo, that the ryots could not legally be compelled to take advances for the cultivation of that crop against their wishes; the result was that the ryots, having discovered the fact, at once threw up the cultivation. Complaints were made to the Government by gentleman in Calcutta, interested in Indigo with the result, as stated by them, that Mr. Mangles was repremanded. As Mr. Mangles left the district immediately afterwards the ryots were afraid to resist the planters and sowed Indigo to a small extent. Consciousness awakened in the minds of the ryots, as to their being *free agents* faded for the time being. Had human beings been endowed with prophetic vision, verily Mr. Mangles could have asked the ryots to wait for one even greater than himself coming as their saviour.

Early in the magistracy of Sir Ashley Eden at Barasat the ryots of Bengal Indigo Company applied to him for protection from the threatened forcible dispossession of their lands by the *Bara-Shaheb* of the Company. The Bengal Indigo Company were the richest firm of indigo traders in Bengal. They had their principal factories all over the Districts of Krisnagore, Jessore and Barasat. Mr. R. T. Larmour,* The General Mofussil Manager, was the leading planter in Bengal and possessed the strength and power of a Despotic Chief. Mr. Eden said, the influence exercised by the company had long been such that the Subordinate Officers of the Government in their neighbourhood, were afraid to do their duty, and in some cases the Police were the instrument made use of by the planters for oppressing the people. The factories in connection with which the disputes, mentioned before, arose were situated in the subdivisions of Kaloroorah and Tarragooney. Mr. Eden directed orders to be

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* A new form of whip or stick was introduced for beating ryots. Mr. Eden said, it consisted of a stick with a leather attached, and was called, "Shamchand" or "Rama-Kant". The authorship of this has been ascribed by some to Mr. Larmour.

issued for the protection of complainants provided the lands proved to be undoubtedly the ryots' own. Mr. Larmour complained to the Commissioner of the Nuddea Division, and this led to a discussion of the question as to the right of the Planter, on an *ex-parte* allegation that a ryot was under advances to him, to enter by force upon the land of such ryot and cultivate indigo there. Sir Ashley Eden strongly maintained that the land being the property of the ryot and not of the planter, the latter had no right whatever, on any such plea, to take possession of the ryot's lands and that the Magistrates were bound, in such cases of tresspass, to protect the ryot in his possession. His views were not upheld by Mr. A. Grote. C. S. the Commissioner who directed him to induce the ryots to cultivate Indigo. But the young Magistrate of Barasat was not a man to sacrifice his conscience to official threat and pressure. A similar question having arisen again, he again gave the same orders to his subordinates to afford protection to the ryots, in the event of the planters' servants entering upon their lands violently to sow there a crop, which the ryots objected to. His orders were again upset by the Commissioner and he was even reprimanded But he remonstrated with Mr. Grote against the views he had taken. Happily for Bengal-ryots, there was a change in the Head of the Government. Sir John Peter Grant was appointed Lieutenant Governor on 1st May 1859. The difference of opinion was referred to him and he declared, as will be seen later, that the principle enunciated by the Magistrate was the true exposition of the law as it stood.

At the latter end of 1858, Mr. Eden was requested by two Europeans connected with the Hobra Factory in the district, to use his influence to make their ryots take advances. He declined and told them to offer the ryots a remunerative price. Instead of doing this. they complained of the Magistrate to Mr. Halliday, the Lieutenant Governor. The result was an interview in which Mr. Eden was confronted with certain persons representing the Indigo interests. Mr. Halliday suggested a compromise and Mr. Eden was directed to induce the ryots to go to the factory to adjust their old accounts. He was also to instruct them fully what their rights were as regards the Indigo cultivation. He pointed out that the result would be disastrous to the interests of the planters, but he was overruled by the Lieutenant Governor and the course was agreed to by the repre-

sentatives of the parties. After this, Sri Ashley Eden drew up a vernacular paper or *rubakari*, with reference to the compulsory attendance of ryots at the Factory to receive advances upon contracts they were forced to sign. The ryots then learnt that it was really *optional* with them to enter into contracts or to refuse to do so. The fact it was optional, became generally known throughout the District and ryots came from Jessore and Krishnagore and took authenticated copies of the order, knowing that the effect of the intimation would be to spread gradually throughout Bengal a knowledge of the fact that it was optional with ryots to enter into the contract or not as they thought fit. Mr. Eden apprehended that the result of such knowledge would be to put a stop to the forced system then existing and took the precaution of obtaining the sanction of the Commissioner previously to granting such copies. The *Rubakari* was issued on the 20th February 1859. The result was, as strongly put by Mr. Eden, that most of the Factories at Barasat were at once closed. His proceedings were approved of by the Government in their letter No. 3066 dated the 13th May 1859.

The Decision of the Government on the point at issue between Messrs Grote and Eden was communicated by letter No. 4516, dated the 21st July 1859. Subsequently copies of the Government Order were forwarded to the Sub-divisions of the District for the information and guidance of the Deputy Magistrates incharge of them. On the 10th August 1859 a new Deputy Magistrate was put in charge of Kalaroa and he applied for a copy of the Decision of the Government for his guidance. Mr. Eden forwarded to him extracts from the Government letter, relating to the general question of Police inteference in Indigo disputes along with his letter dated the 17th August 1859 which contained the following instructions –

"You will perceive that the Course laid down for the Police in Indigo disputes, is to protect the ryot in the possession of his lands, on which he is at liberty to sow any crop he likes without any interference on the part of the planter or any one else. The planter is not at liberty, under a pretext of the ryots having promised to sow indigo for him to enter forcibly upon the land of the ryot. Such promises can only be produced against the ryot in the Civil Court, and the Magisterial authorities have nothing to do with them, for there must be two parties to a

promise, and it is possible that the Ryots whose promises or contracts are admitted, may still have many irresistible pleas to avoid the consequence the planter insists upon."

The Deputy Magistrate issued a Bengalee *perwanna* in terms of the Order. The *Perwanna* was much talked of by the planters and upon their complaint was made the subject of an enquiry by the Government. It was characterised as a carelessly translated paper. Its issue, was disapproved of as indiscreet; but it was proved not to have produced ill consequence any where.

We are glad to find that the Deputy Magistrate was our distinguished townsman, the late lamented Babu Hem Chandra Ker. Another Deputy Magistrate also in charge of Kalaroa, before Babu Hem Chandra Ker, gave an order protecting the ryots against the forcible entry of the planter. He was no other person than the late Nawab Abdul Latiff Bahadoor who was the recognized leader of the Mahomedan Community in Calcutta. Thus they had the moral courage to oppose Mr. Larmour as admitted by him before the Commission. The noble example of the Magistrate of Baraset did not die out, but was afterwards followed by the Magistrate of Krisnagore, Mr. (afterwards Sir) W. J. Herschel. He not only issued perwannas to his Subordinates but also affixed proclamations to the Court-houses for the enlightenment of the ryots.

All these combined to prove the existence of an inclination in the authorites, to afford the ryots that protection practically which had all along been theirs by law and theory. They brought home to the ryot's mind, in unequivocal terms, the fact that they were really *free agents* and it was optional with them to enter into contracts or not as they thought fit. This roused the ryots from their bondman's slumber. Till then the ryots did not hear even a whisper of any intention, on the part of the English Government, to protect them from the oppression of the English planters. On the contrary, the reprimand and rebuke offered to Mr. Mangles and Sir Ashley Eden made the ryots believe that the Government were strongly prejudiced in favour of the planter. Even Justice was travestied when the planters were put upon their trial. Sir Ashley Eden was asked by the Commission to give his opinion as to why this happened and we gather the following from his evidence.

"There certainly was a failure of justice which, in my opinion, may, to a great extent, be attributed to the strong bias which the Governor and many of the officers of the Government have always displayed in favour of those engaged in this particular cultivation : this may also partly have arisen from the difficulty, which exists under the present law, of obtaining a conviction against Europeans. I consider that it has frequently been the case that the Government Officials have sacrificed justice to favour the planters. I will go further and say that, as a young Assistant, I confess I have favoured my own country-men in several instances."

The latent suspicion of the ryots as to the partisanship between the Government and the planters was greatly roused, when on the 1st of August 1857, the Government of Sir Frederick Halliday appointed some of the leading planters in the districts of Krisnagore and Moorshedabad, to be Assistant Magistrates. Rev. Mr. J. G. Lincke of Krisnagore, who mixed freely with the ryots there, said before the Commission that he was in the District when planters were appointed Honorary Magistrates, and that the impression was very unfavourable among the ryots whose expression was – "Now they have made the wolf the shepherd of the sheep." Rev. James Long said he even heard songs condemnatory of planters as Magistrates, set to music and sung with enthusiasm by a band of native singers in the Krisnagore district. The Commission in their Report disapproved of the appointment of unofficial Europeans as Honorary Magistrates, as inexpedient in that excited state of Bengal Proper.

There was even an impression that the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Frederick Halliday, had a share in some of the Concerns. Accordingly when Sir John Peter Grant succeeded him, Rev. Mr. Bomwetsch wrote in a letter to the *Indian Field* –

"When the people wanted to know whether the new Governor, was like the old one *i.e.*, whether he had shared in indigo, and whether he was friend to the planter, I positively answered in the negative."

The planters, never blind to any 'coin of vantage' made most of the alleged phenomenon of a guinea-pig Lieutenant Governor. They hoodwinked the ignorant ryots with the idea that the indigo cultivation was a

quasi Government institution. Their servants even went so far in circulating falsehood that a cultivator deposed before the Commission –

> "The *amin* and *takidgir* told me that there was a new law passed, called *mughurer ain* or the law of the mallet, that unless I dig the indigo lands sufficiently deep, I should have my head beaten with a mallet and indigo sown on it."

But, in spite of all, the mist of ignorance as to the ryots being free agents began to melt away; and they beheld the serene rays of peace and protection radiating from the new ascendant Star at the Belvedere. This happy combination of events might have hastened the Outbreak of 1859-60, but the real cause of it must be sought elsewhere as has always been the case in all popular risings.

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CHAPTER II

CAUSE AND COMMENTS

History shows that popular risings are always connected with the peoples' views of the situation. Even when the views are manifestly wrong the disturbances take place, but they fail to extend beyond the circle of those immediately concerned. In the beginning of the last century, machinery was substituted for hand-labour in England. Many old hands were thrown out of work, and there were ryots to prevent the use of machinery. But the Luddites, as the rioters were called, were not able to gain their end in the long run. After spasmodic attempts, they were suppressed, for ever.

But the case is different when the popular view rests upon the solid foundation of Right. As in a stream, circles of wave gradually widen from the centre of disturbance and spread all around, so the popular belief begins to extend all over the community. Far-sighted thinkers, who can read the signs of the times, take up the cause, as one of general importance, and fight out the battles of righteousness and justice. Such was the case with the Corn Law agitation in England. It originated with the manufacturing classes but was ultimately taken up by men like Richard Cobden and John Bright.

The Indigo-disturbance furnishes another instance in illustration of the above truth. Accordingly we begin with the popular view, as regards the hardship of the system of cultivation, which will unfold the true and primary cause of the disturbance. The Report describes the views taken by the ryots as follow :–

> "it is asserted that the contract for the growth and production of the plant, so far from being voluntary, is forced upon the ryot, who is compelled by more or less of pressure to accept advance; that these advances are rarely given, or are not given in full after the first year or two; that the ryot is compelled to plough, sow, and weed his land, and to cut and cart the plant, at times when he would prefer being engaged in the cultivation of other crops of superior profit; that the land selected and marked off by the servants of the factory is often the best kind of land, most carefully cultivated by the ryot, and most heeded by him for his own

convenience, or that land actually ready for other crops, or even sown with such crops, is forcibly ploughed up and re-sown with indigo : that the mere cultivation is thus rendered to him irksome, repulsive, and harassing in the highest degree; that owing to the precariousness of the crop, and the inadequacy of the payment, the ryot invariably falls into balances, and that persons once agreeing to sow, bequeath the obligation to their descendants in the third and fourth generations, and that these descendants either never able, or if able, are not allowed to free themselves and families from the debt which their fathers have contracted with the factory; that the system which is thus founded on compulsion and maintained by force, is still further rendered odious by the extortion and oppression of the factory servants who divert from its lawful end, a portion even of the small and inadequate payments made to the cultivators : and that the lower orders of servants practice many other ways of oppressing the ryots, or of extorting money from them, such as cutting their gardens, taking away their thatching grass and the produce of their gardens, seizing their ploughs, and carrying away their cattle under pretence of damage done to the growing plant; that in order to prevent ryots from disputing the will of the planter, more serious outrages are often committed, and that instances can be shown where planters or their servants have burnt and knocked down homesteads, plundered bazars, kidnapped and carried off respectable inhabitants and confined them for weeks and months in dark places, transporting them from factory to factory to elude the pursuit of the Police; that even darker outrages on women have been openly perpetrated; and that in consequence, the feeling of the ryots is one of bitter but sullen hatred to the European; that with regard to the native Land-holders, the attitude and encroachments of the planter towards these persons have led to frequent disputes, to violent affrays, to agrarian outrages, and the consequent demoralisation of the people; that constant complaints and protracted litigation have followed on these occurrences; that the planter, commencing to contract with ryots resident on estâtes of which the proprietary right is not held by the factory, has exerted a pressure on those ryots, who then seek the protection of their Zemindar, or he has sought an occasion of provoking a quarrel with the land-holder, in order, it is repeatedly asserted, to extort from the latter the grant of an estate on lease, or in *putni*; that the real and avowed object of extorting these concessions, is that the planter may acquire the rights, influence, and position of a Zemindar, without which he never would be able to compel the production of so much indigo for a single day; that these rights are rarely

alienated, either temporarily or permanently by the Zemindar, of his own free will; but that the alienation would not take place if the Police were not inefficient, the laws weak, and the executive authorities and the Covenanted Magistrates in particular, disposed to side with the European, as against the native interest; that it is owing to the above causes, and not to voluntary acts of the native land-holders, that the planters have managed to absorb so much of the Zemindar's rights and properties; that no improvement is perceptible in the condition of ryots of villages where indigo is cultivated, as compared with that of ryots who do not cultivate indigo, but rather that the former are depressed and improverished by the compulsory and profitless cultivation; that the system has been borne with so long, because the ryots of Bengal is of a passive and enduring nature, and that the dislike evinced during the past season, is merely the expression of feelings pent up for the last twenty or thirty years; that this growing dislike has been noticed by local authorities, intelligent natives, and independent Europeans, and has been occasionally pointed out in official and unofficial correspondence; that if the Zemindars were free agents in the grant of leases, and ryots were free agents in the acceptance of engagements, a great and immediate reduction would take place in the area and extent of indigo cultivation, from the first date when such rights could be openly enjoyed and acted on by either party; and finally, that the whole system, as above described, is vicious in theory; injurious in practice, and radically unsound."

The preceding lines lead to one and only one conclusion. The system was at fault, the system which Mr. Long depricated as one of forced advances and fictitious arrears-pauperising the ryots of a whole district to prop up a serfdom, and Mr. De Latour denounced as appearing neither to recognise the existence of a Magistrate on earth nor a God in Heaven. Naturally the dislike of the ryot for the cultivation would be most intense and their feelings most real and earnest. The following answers from several ryots shewed such was the case :–

"But if my throat is cut I wont sow indigo." – "I will die sooner than cultivate indigo." – "I would rather go to a country where the indigo plant is never seen or sown." – "Rather than sow indigo I will go to another country, I would rather beg than sow indigo." "I would sow indigo for nobody, not even for my father and mother." – "No, I would be rather killed with bullets."

The question, put to himself by Sir Auckland Colvin, on a memora-

ble occasion, comes to our mind – 'If it be real what does this mean ?' – True as those utterances were their full significance could only be understood, from the following remarks of the Commission :–

"It is not easy to possess those, who have not witnessed the demeanour and heard the language of the ryot, as we have done, with a just appreciation of this intense dislike. Ryots of different Concerns, at miles distance from each other, have expressed to us the same idea in language clear, emphatic and pointed, and stricking as coming from the mouths of persons in their rank of life, namely, that indigo and its attendant evils had been the bane of their lives."

The feelings of the ryots were also voiced in the popular songs and current sayings of the day, which, though they gave a faithful image of the under-current of the community, were never taken notice of betime by the Government. With reference to them Mr. Long said as follows before the Commission :–

"Songs have a powerful effect among Bengalees, and are used for religious and other purposes, with great success, justifying the remarks of Burke, "Give me the making of the ballads of a nation and I will give you the making of the laws." I beg to submit a pamphlet published in Bengali and widely circulated, called "The oppression of the indigo planters". It contains songs which have been sung far and wide, among natives and set to music."

The Rev. S. J. Hill of the London Missionary Society repeated before the Commission the following verse of a ballad, sung in various parts of the Moorshedabad district :–

"The enemy of the soil is Indigo;
The enemy of the labour is idleness
So the enemy of caste is Padre Hill."

"Zaminer Shatru nil
Kormer Shatru dhil
Temoni jater Shatru Padre Hill."

These premonitions led Mr. Long to conclude –

"I can assure the Commissioners, that no language can depict the burning indignation, with which indigo planting is and has been regarded

by the native population. It alarms me seriously for the future peace of India, Unless an equitable adjustment of the question is made."

Sir John Peter Grant observed with reference to them as follows :-

"This is the great point of political bearing in the whole question, and it cannot be too attentively considered by all who have any responsibility for the tranquillity of the country, and the strength of the British Government within it. If any one thinks that such a domonstration of strong feeling, by hundreds of thousands of people as we have just witnessed in Bengal has no meaning of greater importance than an ordinary commercial question concerning a particular blue dye, such a person in my opinion is fatally mistaken in the sings of the time."

The causes, which led to the unhappy results, are not now far to seek. The Commission pronounced emphatically that the crisis which had unhappily overtaken the planters in 1860 was one of which might have arisen in any one other year. There was every element ripe and ready for such an outburst of popular feeling. Sir Ashley Eden was decidedly of opinion, that the compulsory character of the cultivation, was the chief cause of the disturbance, the late rise in the prices the additional cause and the sudden knowledge of *free agency* only the approximate cause.

Dr. Duff describes the situation thus in the eloquent language –

"Feelings of discontent under what had begun to loom on their misty minds, though vaguely and indistinctly, as unwarranted or illegal oppressions, became intensified though still suppressed. But though suppressed as regards outward manifestation, they were only secretly "bottled up" untill ready for outburst. This outburst was apparently occasioned, not caused by the famous *Perwanna*. It did not create the feelings of discontent. These existed in full force before. It was not, therefore, the cause of the sudden and unexpected uprising against the indigo system; it was only the incidental occasion of developing feelings which had long been pent up, and had become ripe and ready to break out into open acts of resistance and violence. It was only the immediate occasion of "tapping" the reservoir of accumulated discontent the sudden and unpremeditated stroke of Wat Tyler's hammer."

Rev. James long, accounted for the crisis as follows :–

"To my knowledge the ryots have for many years complained of this factory system, but it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. The rise in prices, the increased value of labour, the ferment of mind produced by recent political events in India, together with the sympathy which is increasing between the educated natives and the masses, have led to the late movement. I believe the *Perwannas* of the Magistrate (Mr. Eden) have been only the occasion that has brought matters to a crisis and shewed the ryots that it was the wish of the Government to deal impartially with the question."

It may be naturally asked here, how did the system go on for years without any change and why did not dissatisfaction openly manifest itself at an early period. The Report furnishes us with answers from more persons than one. We give the answer given by Dr. Duff on the occasion –

"Simply because the labouring population of Bengal have, through all ages been of an abject and servile spirit. Their own Laws and Institutions have constituted them practically serfs; their Rulers whether Hindu and Mahomedan have uniformly treated them as serfs. To the practical or virtual serfdom they have been habituated from birth; and to it they had become resigned from ancient tradition and immemorial usage, alike Civil and Sacred. Having been thus led to regard their condition as decreed unalterably by Fate, they were predisposed patiently to submit to almost any amount of oppression and wrong on the part of their natural superiors, whether Brahmans or Zeminders, Planters or Rulers. Ready however to acknowledge all Rulers *de facto* and regarding in their ignorance, the planters as only a portion of the Ruling Authorities, whom they are bound to obey, they doubtless felt themselves under obligation to submit to much at their hands, which otherwise, they might have been prepared sooner openly to resent."

It would be unfair to conclude the present topic without giving the views of the opposite party and we invite the attention of our readers to the following opinion of Mr. R. T. Larmour. He said before the Commission :–

"Those *perwannas* had the effect of rousing all the ryots throughout the Kishnagore district, and inducing them to attempt to break their engagements. These *perwannas* were followed up by a letter from the Secretary of the Bengal Government to the Commissioner of the Nuddea

Division, finding fault with the conduct of the Magistrate and Deputy Magistrate of Nuddea in cases in which indigo-planters were concerned, and which led the natives generally to believe that the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (Sir J. P. Grant) was strongly prejudiced against indigo and indigo-planting. The ryots, labouring under the belief that they would receive the support of Government in not fulfilling their engagements, became very daring, and attacked and maltreated Europeans when riding about the country. A petition dated 4th February 1860 was presented through the Commissioner of Nuddea by myself, begging for the immediate interference of Government to counteract the impression that the ryots had received by the reports that were being circulated and the *perwanna* that had been issued. No notice whatever was taken of my representation and when a notification was issued to disabuse the ryots' minds, it came too late, and had no good effect."

Another Planter Mr. James Forlong of Nischindipore factory stated in addition to what Mr. Larmour said –

"What first unhinged the relations between, the planters and the ryots, was unquestionably the Act X of 1859, as the Act struck directly at the root of all authority possessed by the planters, as land-holders. The effect of the Act was industriously propagated among the ryots by *mooklyars* and others. A system of agitation against the planters was organised, and countenanced openly by many influential men in Calcutta, and also by the Missionaries in the Krishnagore District. Emissaries swarmed through the district giving bad advice to the ryots."

The view of the planters have already been criticised. They failed to understand the real point at issue, as the game was theirs. Their so called charges agsinst the Missionaries and others had been answered by the Commission, and we give their findings below –

"The Missionaries have advised the ryots to obey the laws, to commit no illegalities, to sow indigo this year and, if oppressed, to appeal to the higher authorities. Indeed the assertion that the refusal of the ryots to sow indigo has been produced by the preaching of Missionaries, is one entirely without foundation of truth."

"The Editor of the "Hindoo Patriot" (Babu Hurish Chandra Mookerjee) who has naturally taken a great interest in the crisis, has emphatically denied before us the truth of a rumour which charged,him with having sent emissaries into the districts : and the British Indian

Association repudiates any connection with *mookleyars* or legal agents who took up the ryots' cases under Act XI of 1860 and gave them legal advice. But these agents, acted in a perfectly legal, open, and fair way, and are a different class of persons from the supposed agents of sedition."

"In our opinion it is extremely unreasonable to attribute the sudden failure of an unsound system which has grown up silently for years, to the officials of Missionaries who told the people that they were free agents."

The Lieutenant Governor accepted the findings in his Minute and paid the following tribute to the Missionaries :–

"I must not pass this last point, without respectfully expressing my admiration of the conduct of the Missionary body, throughout these trying events."

We commenced with popular views of the dispute and have tried to pick out the internal and real cause of the disturbance. We have also pointed out that the planters, blind to the inherent defects of their system, magnified some of the external circumstances, the relation of which to the Indigo riot may be compared to that of the 'greased cartridges', to the Mutiny which immediately preceded it. It now remains to be seen whether any other conclusion as to the genesis of the disturbance can be arrived at, from an examination of the planter's version of the situation as compared with the ryot's views previously given. We again quote the Commissioners in *extenso* to exhibit the two poles of the controversy, which is always necessary for presentation of an impartial estimate before the readers. The Report on the point begins :–

"On the other hand, the case foı the planters, as before the public, to the best of our knowledge, has been set forth as follows. The rule of the planter, as proprietor of lands, is a milder and more temperate rule than that of the native. It was not so much the wish of the planter to secure landed rights in permanency or for a time, as to secure the growth of a fair portion of indigo plant. Could he be certain that the free contracts entered into by the ryot resident on the estates of others, would he faithfully adhered to, there would be no need for him to seek the rights and influence of zemindar. But his cultivation is so liable to interruption and interference, at the ill-will, caprice, or dictation of the native zemindar, and the ryots are so often led away by evil advice and instigation, that no

resource is left to the planter, but to acquire rights which may enable him successfully to prevent or resist the intrusion of others. The zemindar, aware of this necessity, artfully and culpably foments disputes between the planter and ryot, inorder that the latter may fly to his landlord for advice and assistance, and that the former may be compelled by the necessities of his situation, to pay exorbitant prices for *putnis*, or to take on lease, at a high bonus and a rental liable to enhancement at the expiration of the term of years, lands so assessed that no effort, or skill in management will enable him to collect an equivalent from the ryots. In this way, the planter is put to unnecessary expenses, has less money at command, and cannot afford to benefit the ryot as much as he would desire. But for all this, the marketable value of land, owing to the above purchases and operations, has immensely risen. The difficulties of planters have further been increased by the jealousy and the suspicion with which the executive authorities, especially those of the covenanted service, have regarded the increasing wealth and influence of the independent European. His very presence being felt as a check to the continuance of abuses, it has been disliked; as a natural consequence, his endeavours have been thwarted; no allowance has been made for his position, and there has been a constant desire, on the part of Government and its officers, to weaken his influence, to invade his rights, and to drive him from the country. Inspite of this, the benefits of the European's presence, as planter and land-holder, have been everywhere acknowledged. He protects the ryots from the exactions of the Police, from the rapacity of the money-lender, and from the payment of extra cesses demanded by the zemindar. The laying out of roads, the establishment of school and dispensaries, attest his practical benevolence. Though it be urged by the opponents of the system that the payment for the plant grown by the ryot be not directly remunerative to him, yet this inadequate return is owing, in some cases, to the sheer indolence and obstinacy of the cultivator, who will not exert himself to plough and weed at proper times : in others, to a succession of bad seasons acting on a crop confessedly so precarious as indigo; and in others to a sudden and unprecedented rise in the wages of labour, and the price of all other produce; which rise has unfortunately not hitherto been met by a corresponding rise in the price paid for the plant. Yet with all this, the planter has been in the habit of allowing his ryots to hold their land at the low original rates of rent, while rents in neighbouring zemindaries have been even doubled; and he has also assisted them in many ways; advancing them loans without interest when their cattle die and when their houses are either burnt or blown down.

He is daily accessible to natives of all classes, either when riding through his villages or when holding a Court, where unbought, summary, and substantial justice is regularly distributed. By the well directed energy of the planter, large tracts have been cleared of jungle; population has increased, and the increase has been followed by the social progress, visible in the large houses, the better clothes, and the more numerous cattle of the inhabitants. The presence of the planter has been generally synonymous with order, progress and contentment. His failings, it is earnestly contended, have been those of the situation in which he is placed. The Police are corrupt, the Law Courts are remote, and the Procedure is complicated and slow; the zemindars are usurping and oppressive. The ryot for all the kindness shown to him, is idle and faithless. The idleness necessitates the close and constant supervision of the fields destined for indigo, at each season, of the successive agricultural operations by the inferior servants of the factory; and this faithlessness would compel the planter to sue the ryot for attempted breach of contract, were it not that no summary proceeding is open to him, and that to refer him to a civil suit, with its delay and circuitousness, would be a mere mockery. Instances of violent affrays and agrarian lawlessness however numerous in past times, have substantially decreased in frequency, and in many districts no such outrages are now known at all. Complaints of planters either by zemindars or ryots have entirely disappeared from particular Courts; and whatever may have been the offences committed by individuals, the planters as a body stand out to the public as just and independent men who circulate large amount of capital; who put down crime and diffuse civilisation; and whose presence in the interior in the eyes of an enlightened Government should be at once, a guarantee against rebellion, an element of strength and a source of prosperity."

The foregoing lines principally deal with two points, the complaints urged by the planters against zeminders and Government Officials, and the advantages arising from their presence in the country. In the complaints were suggested plausible pretexts as to the origin of the disturbance. But they could no more bear the light of truth and criticism, than darkness can bear the rays of the rising sun. As to the interference and instigation of zemindars, the Commission pronounced the following verdict after full consideration and mature deliberation :-

"Nor again have we any reason to believe that the discontent was generally fostered either by zemindars themselves resident on the spot

or by emissaries from Calcutta. And we are of opinion that all zemindars are much too fearful of any general combination of ryots, as well as too jealous of any signs of independence as likely to affect themselves, to have given any secret impulse or instigation to the peasantry. On the whole, then, we cannot subscribe to the opinion that there is any thing in the conduct of native zemindars which evinces hostility to the cultivation of Indigo or which places a bar to the investment of European capital."

Sir John Peter Grant acquiesced in the finding of the Commission and recorded that native zemindars, generally, had no hostility to the planter as a class.

The only complaint as regards the attitude of zemindars, which was admitted as an undisputed fact, referred to the practice of the *zemindar* giving a lease of his *zemindary* right to a planter, at a rent which not only left no margin for expenses and risks of collection, but which was largely in excess of the gross rental lawfully demandable from the ryots. Ruinous as the practice was to the interest of the peasantry, the zemindars can hardly be made responsible for it. This will clearly appear from the following remarks of Mr. Grant and the Commission :

"In such cases the only possible reason for agreeing to pay the excess is the expectation that, by the misuse of the *zemindari* right, the holder may be able to extract in some way, directly or indirectly, more from the ryot than is legally demandable. I cannot see that the extraction of the same value in the form of Indigo plant, is, in any legal or moral view different from an illegal cess of money. The planters complain of their practice; and it is certainly very wrong in the *zemindar* to sell, as it were, not only his own rights but those of his *ryots*. But I cannot think that it is right in the planter to become a party to the act."

"But we cannot but feel that the zemindars of Bengal have a right to sell, at their own price, the landed influence which they themselves do not always desire to relinquish, and which the planters, by their own showing, declare to be of essential and even vital important to their main business. The native gentlemen cannot be prevented from making the bargain most advantageous to themselves; and if they see the planter more than usually anxious to gain a special object, it can hardly be wondered that, for the gratification of that object, they should exact a high price. This is the law of buying and selling all over the world."

In the admission of the practice, however lies another proof of the unprofitableness of the crop to the husbandmen; what the planters lost in giving premium to zeminders, they gained in discount from ryots. As zemindars, the planters put forward an incidental advantage to the ryot in the form of a low rent. But Sir John Peter Grant has pointed out that not a single instance was advanced in which rents had been reduced by an indigo planter on obtaining a lease of *taluk*, and only few instances were advanced in which a *neighbouring zemindar* had raised his rents while those of the Indigo ryots were not raised.

In this connection we are sorry to find Sir William Hunter speaking of the indigo ryot of 1860 in the *Imperial Gazetteer* as follows –

> "Soon after the first European planters established themselves in the district a feeling of jealousy arose among large native landholders, who found their influence suffering in consequence of the presence of the new comers. They accordingly endeavoured to raise in the minds of the cultivators an ill feeling against the planters and against the strange crop. Constant quarrels followed, and the planters failing to get redress from the Courts had recourse to fighting the native land-holders with bands of club-men. The zemindars took every occasion to create a feeling of dissatisfaction among the Indigo cultivators, and not without success."

It is a matter of surprise that even Sir W. W. Hunter who was a recognised authority on all Indian questions should have fallen into such a lamentable mistake. But when we find in his 'Statistical Account of Bengal' that his account of indigo was condensed from papers furnished to him by indigo planters, surprise disappears as mistakes by circumstances made inevitable. Nevertheless he bears testimony to the inherent rottenness of the system and the unprofitableness of crop in the following lines –

> "Moreover, the husbandmen were in a state of chronic indebtedness to the factories for advances, which went on in their books from father to son and were a source of hereditary irritation against the planters, whenever a bad season forced them to put pressure upon the husbandmen to pay up. The cultivation of cereals and oilseeds now paid the husbandmen better than indigo, and so intensified the feeling against it."

However there is a shadow of truth when planters said that designing men were trying to lay the axe at the root of the Indigo plantation. In every riot, reform, or revolution, there is an extreme section who by acts of indiscretion and violence bring discredit upon their legitimate leaders. In the great French Revolution the misdeeds of the Girondists in its early stage and those of the Jocobins in the later may be cited as examples. If we are allowed to compare small things with great, it may be said, the Indigo disturbance furnished us with another illustration of the truth. Dr. Duff pointed out that the *perwannas* annouced the simple truth – that the ryots were really free and fairly entitled to exercise their rights as freeman – but they did not sufficiently provide for the contingent result of such an announcement falling suddenly and nakedly from authority on minds, ignorant and ill-balanced and in an irritable, inflammable, and highly resentful state. Accordingly we find, some of the ryots, in their implacable hatred for the planters were unable to understand the nature and scope of the *perwannas*, and misconstrued them to mean that they were permitted to break the indigo engagements already made. They even tried to make converts to their belief. Their number was however few, and their preachings did not affect the whole body of ryots, always noted for their moderation and submissiveness.

The complaint, against the Officers of the Government has been characterised by Sir John Peter Grant as a preposterous charge and it could not but fall completely to the ground. From the admission of the planters themselves, and from the whole tenour of the Orders usually passed in Indigo disputes, the Commissioners did not find in it any substratum of truth whatsoever. The following observations of Mr. Grant will show that the truth was the other way –

> "On the contrary they find that Magistrates have not always been sufficiently alive to the position of the ryots nor accorded to them a due share of protection and support. They say "It is not too much to say that had all Magistrates held the scales in equal balance, a cultivation of the character which we have clearly shown indigo to be would not have gone on for such a length to time." I am obliged to support the finding of the Commission on the points."

The alleged complaints have been proved to be without foundation.

However we owe it in justice to the planters that we should quote the following observations of the Commissioners.

"While thus condemning the system as it now stands, we are anxious to give due weight to all the points which may be alleged in defence or extenuation. Doubtless the planters have, as a body suffered much from bad seasons, and have not thought themselves in a position to afford liberal terms to the ryots. If they have pressed on the ryots, which we do not justify, they have themselves been under a pressure of circumstances, and in some cases have only been able to maintain their position. The Administration of Civil Justice has been defective. The evils admitted to exist in the system of planting are not universal wherever indigo is grown, nor are the offences committed by the planters or their servants altogether peculiar to indigo. Some of the plant is grown on a fair system, though much is grown on a bad one, while in some districts discontent is rife, in others no complaint is made as yet."

We now propose to examine the advantages set forth by the planters. They are chiefly twofold. The first of these is of a general character and speaks of the importation of British capital and the presence of British settlers in this country. We are glad to observe that we do not find a dissentient voice in this regard and its importance will be pointed out when we shall speak of the economical character of the dispute.

Next come the practical advantages offered to ryots and with reference to them Sir John Peter Grant wrote as follows in his Minute.

"On the planter's side reliance has been placed on certain incidental advantages claimed for an indigo ryot. So far as such alleged incidental advantages are of a tangible character, they have faded away before the search of the Commission. But there is really little use in discussing such a point. There is but one judge of the relative value of the advantages of the cultivation, direct and incidental, and that is the ryot. And he has delivered his judgement on the point in an unmistakeable manner."

The Commissioners also said of these alleged advantages that :–

"As far as our enquiries have enabled us to discover positive facts, we have heard of but two dispensaries and a few vernacular schools."

This reminds us of the humorous remarks in the preface to the drama

'Nil Durpan' – 'If the application of a little turpentine after beating by *Shamchand*, be forming a dispensary, then it may be said that in every factory there is a dispenasry.'

We are sorry not to find in the Report any acknowledgment of substantial justice being dispensed in the so-called Courts of the planters. Be that as it may, we can not refrain from pointing out that they were no more recognised by the Law of the land than the sylvan Courts described in the lays of the Scottish Ministrels.

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CHAPTER III

THE STORM AND STREESS

In speaking of the sudden casting off by the ryot of a yoke which galled him for generations Sir John Peter Grant drew attention to two silent but important changes which added to the misery of the peasantry. The first consisted in the purchase of *zemindary* and other superior tenures by the planters, which established the relation of land-lord and tenant between the planter and the ryot. How this opened out a new source of oppression of the ryot, we reserve for discussion in another chapter. The other change was a practical adherence by the shrewd planter to the well known maxim – "United we stand, divided we fall."

Formerly the planters were at feud with each other and this afforded some refuge to ryots standing in the midst of rival manufacturers. But commencing from a time, about 1845, and especially, since the establishment of a central "Indigo Planters' Association" the planters portioned out the country amongst themselves and honorably abstained from interfering with each others "spheres of influence." Though the result had been good for the general peace of the country, it brought the energies of the planters to a focus to oppress the poor ryots. The planters stood united to protect their common interest in the growing of the Indigo plant. There were inter-telepathic communications amongst themselves, and their Association at Calcutta was kept informed of what was going on in the Muffisil.

Thus the planters were fully alive to the growing symptoms of awakening life among the ryots, and tried from the beginning to stifle its growth. They understood that it was becoming well nigh impossible for them to enjoy the lion's share in the future. They realised the truth, – of the Scotch bard's famous line –

'The stage at bay is a dangerous foe'

and began to prepare themselves for the emergency. They successively drew the attention of the Government to the opening revolt, first in April secondly in November 1859, and thirdly, as mentioned in the evidence of Mr. Larmour, in February 1860, and finally in the form of a deputa-

tion from the Indigo Planters' Association at Calcutta, early in March 1860. Sir John Peter Grant thus became acquinted with the planters' side of the case. The Deputation prayed for the speedy adoption of two measures. The one was the issue of a Notification by Government, impressing upon the ryots the duty of fulfilling their engagements, as the ryots were labouring under a mistaken belief as to the views of the Government in regard to the cultivation of Indigo. The second measure was, that special legislation should be had recourse to, for the purpose of making the breach of an agreement to cultivate Indigo punishable summarily by a Magistrate. The Lieutenant Governor lost no time in issuing a Notification to that effect. The Notification dated the 14th March 1860 was ordered to be carefully translated into Bengali and distributed broadcast in Indigo districts in which the misunderstanding had occurred. He then put himself in communication with the Legislative Member of Council for Bengal for the introduction of a Bill for the summary enforcement of existing engagements for the cultivation of Indigo.

On the other hand, when he went out touring through the river districts of Bengal in August 1859, he touched for two or three days at the Sudder Sations of Krisnagore and Berhampore; petitions came pouring forth from a large number of ryots complaining against the attitude of Government Officials, in cases where planters were a party. The complaints were enquired into and they were found to be true to a great extent. His Honour also made arrangements so far as possible for the redress of their grievances. The Lieutenant Governor strongly urged the Commissioners and District Officers to spare no pains in impressing upon the villagers the duty of honestly fulfilling their engagements whilst also explaining that it was always optional with a ryot to agree to cultivate Indigo or not, as it best suited his own interest. Weekly submission of Reports of the state of the Indigo Districts, was insisted upon, to keep the Lieutenant Governor acquainted with what was taking place in the interior.

The ryots, at last, in contrast to their previous condition of apathy and inability to help themselves, exhibited a spirit of resistance, and a determination and a power to act together. They became desperate and were determined not to sow indigo any more. Babu Sisir Coomar Ghose,

the renowned Editor of the great *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, explains, in his *Indian Sketches*, the origin of this great combination in which, he says that millions of Indigo-ryots and other Bengalees shewed a degree of patriotism, self-sacrifice and devotion scarcely witnesed in the annals of the world before. We give here the substance of what he has written in this connection. While the feelings of the ryots were in a state of the greatest tension, two villagers Vishnu Churn Biswas and Digumbar Biswas, of Chowgacha in Nuddea, raised the banner of rebellion against the planters. They were formerly, *Dewans* of indigo concerns, but left their offices, in bitterness of minds at the oppression of the planters. They made up their mind to throw off the yoke of serfdom, and roused the ryots to take arms against their sworn enemies. They sent the 'fiery-cross' of revenge from village to village, and even indented club-men from the district of Backerganj at their own cost for any outbreak that might happen. They also financed the ryots in their law suits with the planters and infused new hopes in them. The ryots now began to gather round their standard and break out in open revolt. The Biswases made immense sacrifice for the cause they took up. Their money losses were about seventeen thousand rupees. These are the types of village Hampden –

"................That with dauntless breast.

The little tyrant of his fields withstood.

Pity, posterity knows so little of them."

Mischief was then afoot. The exasperated peasantry took to various means, in some cases most daring, to molest the planter. Europeans riding about the country were insulted and asaulted. Planters were violently resisted in the performance of thier usual works, such as measuring lands; *ameens, khalasis, gomosthas* were taken prisoner. There was a regular panic among them. In some cases the planters were only able to disperse the mob on loading their guns. Supplies were being stopped by villagers. Growing crops were destroyed. Factories began to be attacked and plundered, and in some cases, burnt. It is said that a most flourishing factory was burnt down and in a single night the outturn of a year was reduced to ashes. Accounts were ransacked from *sherista* and burnt. Even Government Officials, engaged in investigations were mal-

treated. Mr. E. F. Lingham, a Deputy Magistrate, narrowly escaped being put to death. Mobs assembled in large numbers, armed with spears swords bamboos and shields.

Such were the works of spoliation and devastation. However, the planters were not silent, there were free exchanges of blows on both sides and many were the victims of violence. We need not trouble our readers with individual cases of disturbance but confine ourselves to the wise measures adopted by the Government to put an end to the disturbance. Those who are anxious to gather these cases will find some of them described by the present Cheif-Secretary to the Government of Bengal, the Hon'ble Mr. C. E. Buckland, in his most valuable book – "Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors." We give here, however, some of the opinions which will bring home to our readers' minds the seriousness of the situation.

Rev. James Long wrote in the columns of the *Harkaru* –

> "The daily press here being all on the side of the indigo planting interest announce that peace and order are prevailing now in the indigo districts, with few exceptions. I have information of a different kind however and from trustworthy sources. It is a peace procured by the dungeons and the stock – by the Magistrate's pandering to the interest of planters. The magistrate gets good cheer in the planter's house; of course he is not ungrateful enough to give a decision in favour of the ryot, which besides, would bring on him the abuse of the Calcutta Press. The unjust deeds of certain Magistrates are noted and in due time will come to light.
>
> A 'reign of terror' exists in certain districts – factory godowns had they ears, could tell sad accounts of the sufferings of ryots. Yes Sir, certain planters can make use of *black holes* as well, as Serajdowla did; while the violation of their daughters will teach ryots, how they complain of the Indigo Saheb. A ryot's life will soon not be safe, who bears testimony against the planter."

Sir John Peter Grant, while returning from a tour along the Kumar and the Kaligunga, – two rivers which chiefly run through Nuddea and Jessore, described his experiences thus in one of his Minutes.

"I do not know whether it ever fell to the lot of an Indian Officer to

steam for fourteen hours through a continous double street of suppliants for justice; all were most respectful and orderly but also were plainly in earnest. It would be folly to suppose that such a display on the part of tens of thousands of people, men, women and children has no deep meaning. The organisations and capacity for combined and simultaneous action in the cause, which this remarkable demonstration over so large an extent of country proved, are subjects worthy of much consideration."

Last though not the least, Lord Canning wrote –

"I assure you, that for about a week, it caused me more anxiety than I have had, since the days of Delhi." "And from that day I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames."

The Government however took prompt notice of these disturbances. Services of the strongest Magistrates were brought into requisition in indigo districts, where the staff of Magisterial officers was also sufficiently strengthened. It was even thought advisible by the Lieutenant Governor in case of things taking a more serious turn than the local Offices seemed to anticipate, to have ready at hand, in the neighbourhood of those places in which the excitement was most prevalent, Detachments of the Police Battalions of such strength as might be expected to put down any riot or violent outbreak which might have occurred, and as far as possible to protect any person or property that might have been menaced. Accordingly he placed at the disposal of the Commissioner of the Nuddea Division four Detachments with three European Officers of the 6th Battalion of the Bengal Military Police, to be posted in the different parts requiring their presence. The extreme measure previously recommended was adopted in the shape of a temporary Act known as Act XI of 1860. Its object was two-fold. On the one hand, it sought to avert a great commercial evil by giving temporarily summary powers to Magistrates as regards enforcement of indigo contracts : on the other, it held out hopes to the less excited ryots that their grievances would be duly enquired into, by the appointment of an independent Commission. The Commission consisted of W. S. Seton-Karr Esq. C. S., President, R. Temple Esq. C. S., Rev. J. Sale, W. F. Fergusson Esq.– nominee of the Indigo Planters' Association and Babu Chandra Mohan Chatterjee rep-

resenting the British Indian Association. The formation of the Commission gave a check for the time being to the high ebullition of feelings on both sides. The Commission commenced their sittings on the 18th May 1860 and both, planters and ryots began to watch their proceedings with the greatest eagerness and solicitude.

In the mean time, however the Government shewed considerable tact and judgement in putting a stop to popular rising and inducing the ryots to sow the crop for the current season. Sir John Peter Grant was equally accessible to planters, ryots and the public in connection with the Indigo dispute. No sooner complaints reached him regarding the oppression of planters or violence of ryots, than he caused searching enquiries to be made by the proper authorities. In each case the results of enquiry were forwarded to the complaining parties for their information. These correspondences form the bulk of the Government publication known as "Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal No. XXXIII." Sir John Peter Grant held the scale of Justice even and opened out his arms of protection to all. He acted according to law and never flinched from the path of duty in fear of consequences that might have happened.

The Report of the Commission was out by the latter end of August 1860. The Commissioners were not agreed in their views. Messrs. Temple and Fergusson append Notes of Dissent showing why they differed from the conclusions of the majority. The Report fully discussed the various issues involved in the case and described the whole situation in unimpassioned language and gave an impartial estimate of the nature and progress of the controversy. We may say here, that the best analysis of the Report is furnished by the Lieutenat-Governor's Minute on the subject, which was dated the 17th December 1860. It is also the best comment and criticism of the Report of the Commissioners. Their findings are of the nature of judicial utterances, and we have already made quotations, where required. However for the judgement of our readers, we give at the end of the Chapter, those paragraphs of the Minute which bear on, – the relations between the planters and the ryots; the evils requiring to be remedied; and the Notes of Dissent. We leave out the recommendations proposed by the Commission, as they are of very lit-

tle interest at present.

However there were certain points discussed by Messrs. Temple and Fergusson which we cannot omit to notice here. The readers will gather these from the following extracts from the Minute of the Lieutenant Governor. We find here the seeds of the thorny growth which developed afterwards into the existing Arms Act –

> "These two same members recommended the general disarming of all natives in Bengal, but without taking away clubs. The long, heavy ironbound club in use is a formidable *lethal* weapon; and a disarming in Bengal, which should not touch the most common *lethal* weapon used in affrays, would be operative, I fear, only for harm. It would disarm the peaceable man, and allow the professional bravo of the country to carry his own peculiar arms. I would rather reverse the operation. I do not see in the evidence anything to show that the mass of the people in Bengal, a quiet and well behaved race, should be disarmed. I would like to see them much ready and more stout in self defence than they are. But I would disarm and punish the hired clubmen, and I would punish all who employ them, without exception of classes. I trust that a provision in the Penal Code introduced by the Bengal Member of the Legislative Council, in consequence of a suggestion from me, will have the effect of enabling the Magistrate to cut off the root of affrays, by imposing some responsibility on those in whose interest they are committed, as recommended by those two members of the Commission."

The Government of India reviewed the Minute of the Lieutenant Governor on the 27th February 1861 and generally agreed with him. Lord Canning also held that the manufacturer compelled the ryot to furnish the plant at a price not equal to the cost of its production. High encomium was passed on Mr. Grant for the great ability displayed in the Minute.

The Report reached England in due course. We give here the observation of a Member of Parliament on perusing the Report of the Commission.

Mr. J. Layard says –

> "He read their Report from beginning to end, and he must say had risen from its perusal with a feeling of shame and indignation which he

could find no words to express."

Sir Charles Wood in his despatch on the subject dated the 18th April 1861 to the Governor-General wrote –

> "I entirely concur with the Commissioners, with the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and with your Lordship, that the evidence taken before the Commission, including that of the planter himself, is conclusive as to the fact, that the cultivation was *unprofitable* to the ryot who was required to furnish the plant at a price, which with the extra charge to which he was subjected did not reimburse him for the cost of production."

The fundamental conclusion of the Commission as to the *unprofitableness* of the indigo cultivation was thus supported by the hierarchy of authorities. As a natural corollary, to the conclusion, if followed that the planters should either wind up their concerns or grant important concessions to the ryots. Mr. Fergusson the representative of the planters, was also of opinion that judicious concession would be the best policy for the planters to adopt towards the ryots. But as the adjudication of the concessions to be made, would be a fruitful source of fresh quarrels, Sir Charles Wood issued directions from his seat of authority as follows. –

> "The interference on the part of Government should be confined in the words of one of the witnesses, to providing good magistrates, good judges and good police, who shall see justice done to all and leave no room for oppression on the one part and fraud on the other."

These remarks were a mere repetition of what Sir John Peter Grant said in his Minute in connection with the answer of a planter as to what terms should be offered in future by the planters to the ryots. Accordingly it may be said that the Minute of the Lieutenant-Governor also indicated the policy to be followed in future. It is needless to write that it was approved of, both, by Lord Canning here, and Sir Charles Wood (afterwards Lord Halifax), in England.

Some of the natural results of the disturbance were as follows. The advantages hitherto enjoyed by the planters, vanished away. The free agency of the ryots established itself in the minds of all. The principles

of neutrality, with reference to the relations between planters and ryots commended themselves to the Rulers. The *aegis* of protection stretched firmly in cases of oppression. The impression, that the Government had its share in the cultivation of the crop, fainted far. Justice poured forth its blessings to all irrespective of creed, colour, and caste. It became thus evident to all observers that the days of enforcing the cultivation at the bayonet-point of oppression would be no more. These causes prognosticated the natural decay of the indigo trade in Bengal. Sir Richard Temple, a member of the Commission, afterward recorded in his *'Men and Events of my time in India'* that 'Indigo planting in Bengal eventually succumbed to the fact that the plant could no longer be produced with profit to the cultivators.' But the death knell of its palmy state was sounded by the Bengalee drama *Nil Durpan* in which the author 'held the mirror up to nature.' The drama itself, its English translation and the celebrated trial connected with it all enkindled a fire which burnt up the blue dye of oppression. The Hon'ble Mr. Buckland points out that 'the Indigo interest had long been doomed and never recovered its former position in Bengal.' Sir W. W. Hunter writes in the *Imperial Gazetteer*, that the indigo industry has not recovered from the depression and actual damage caused by the Indigo riots of 1860,' and his biographer Mr. F. H. Skrine observed in his recent book that the "Mirror of Indigo" became a sort of *'Uncle Tom's Cabin'* and led to drastic measures in the relation between planters and natives.'

Though the Despatch of the Secretary of State sealed the fate of the Indigo interest in Bengal the disturbance did not cease all on a sudden. It assumed a new phase in the spring of 1861 and was chiefly connected with the realisation of rent under Act X of 1859. On the 4th March 1861 a deputation of the Planters' Association waited upon Lord Canning and submitted the evils, which they apprehended, in the realisation of rents from ryots, and the payment of land revenue. Sir John Peter Grant was present when the deputation was received. Two Special Commissioners were appointed to deal with the difficulties in question. There were also cases of serious outrage and violence but in each case the aggrieved parties were assissted by a protective force.

The Special Commissioners prepared their Report after a few

months, which were submitted by Sir John Grant to the Government of India. The latter on receipt of them pointed out that Sir John Peter Grant, as well as the Special Officers misunderstood the primary object, which was to effect a settlement of the differences between the land-holders and the ryots. Sir John Peter Grant said in reply that the permanent and final adjustment of differences at the bottom of which was Indigo, was not possible, as the Special Commissioners were forbidden to enquire into that subject. The correspondence between the two Governments caused some unpleasantness. Lord Canning deprecated the tone of Mr. Grant's letter as disrespectful, out of keeping with the relative positions of the two Governments. Sir John Peter Grant expressed his regret in an apology on the day of his retirement, the 23rd April 1862.

Since the unfortunate difference of opinion as to the rent question, Lord Canning leaned towards planters' interest and assumed a tone towards Mr. Grant which thwarted the latter's noble policy. The reversal of policy of the Governor General caused alarm in the native community, and their leading journal the *Hindoo Patriot* of 1862, observed as follows with regard to the transition which the indigo difficulty underwent.–

> "The planters got up a false rent cry, to which the Government of India, bullied into a temporary conviction, yielded. The vacillation which the Supreme Government betrayed did not pass unnoticed or effectless. It immediately told upon the Lieutenant Governor and local officers, and if rumour may be trusted, the last year did not close without seeing indigo tyranny increase with redoubled vigour, and the ryots euthralled in a still more galling yoke. It is a fact that his Lordship was blinded in the matter of rent. He gave the Government of Bengal the authority to advance loans from the public treasury to the Planter-zemindars, in other words to remit, the public revenue for future payment on the plea of the recusancy of the ryots. This was a course so unprecedented, so novel, and so completely demonstrative of the partiality or weakness of the Government, that it had but to reach the notice of the Secretary of State to be countermanded. Sir Charles Wood at once saw through the error, and sent out strict orders prohibiting the course adopted by Government."

The last topic for our consideration is the attitude of the Loeal Gov-

ernment towards the planters and the ryots and how each repaid the Government, for its beneficent acts. Sir John Peter Grant was of opinion that no human power exerted in defiance of the law in support of the system of cultivation of indigo could have upheld it much longer, and that if the Government had disregarded justice and policy so far as to make the attempt, it would have been speedily punished by a great agrarian rising, the destructive effects of which upon European and all other capital no man could calculate. He earnestly set himself to work from the day he was appointed Lieutenant Governor to save Bengal by his wise discretion and judicious acts from two impending calamities, *viz.*, the ruination of the Indigo trade and the extinction of the Bengal ryot. According to Mr. Grant the whole cultivation of Bengal was in his hand, and the ruin of this mighty interest would have been the ruin of the country. The trade could have flourished again but, as said by Goldsmith :–

"But a bold peasantry their country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied :"

The People of Bengal were deeply grateful to the Lieutenant Governor and raised a universal chorus of praise. An Address was given to him, signed by Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb and others on behalf of Rajas, Zamindars, Talukdars, Merchants, Tradesmen, Agriculturists and other natives of the province of Bengal. The Address was acknowledged in suitable terms by the Secretary to the Bengal Government. We make the following selections from the Address.

"Your Honour has been the first Governor during the last fifty years, who has had the moral courage to face boldly the evils of this iniquitous system (indigo cultivation), to assert in respect to it the supremacy of the law, and to vindicate the rights as free men of hundreds of thousands of innocent ryots; who toiling under its galling thraldom had hitherto vainly pined for justice.

Discontent and heart burnings are naturally rife amongst the parties interested in the perpetuation of the hitherto prevailing system of indigo manufacture. We have therefore not been surprised to see that your Honour's administration has been assailed by those interested parties with an unreasoning violence for the policy of justice adopted by you, that your motives have been grossly misrepresented, your name

covered with obloquy, and bitter personal opposition offered in return for the sage and manly counsels vouchsafed by your Honour for their behalf. We must add, Hon'ble Sir, that had it not been for your prompt, firm, farseeing and wise measures, the indigo dispute would have ended in a catastrophe of bloodshed and horror, which the peaceful plains of Bengal have not witnessed since the establishment of British rule in India."

The Lieutenant Governor in his reply gracefully gave the credit to his Officers Executive and Judicial who had been immediately in contact with the parties concerned in the agitation. Of these Officers special mention must be made of the names of Mr. A. Eden afterwards Sir Ashley Eden Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and W. J. Herschel, then Magistrate of Krishnagore. The latter was the grandson of the great astronomer Sir William Herschel and after wards a Baronet. It will be seen later on that these Civilians were the target of attack by the planters and their representatives in the Press.

It now remains to be seen how different was the attitude of the planters towards the Government for its various measures. Instead of paying any tribute of gratitude to Sir John Peter Grant for averting the threatened destruction of the indigo trade, the Planters' Association submitted a Petition against him to the Governor-General-in-Council. The Petition was dated the 26th July 1860, and contained the following prayer –

"Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Excelleny in Council to take into consideration this Petition, and to pass such orders as may oblige his Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to refrain from pursuing a course of conduct which cannot but be ruinous to the Indigo planter in Bengal, and to point out to his Honour the impropriety of interfering with the due course of the administration of the Law by the regularly appointed Judicial Officers as laid down by the Legislative Council of India and which interference is, as your petitioners submit, both illegal and unconstitutional, and especially indiscreet in the cause of a dispute between capital and labour, and that your Excellency may pass such further orders as may under the above circumstances seem proper."

Sir John Peter Grant replied to the accusations in his Minute, to the

Governor-General-in-Council, dated the 17th August, 1860. His Excellency fully supported the Minute and his Secretary communicated the fact to the Bengal Government in his letter No. 1639 dated the 31st August 1860, which concluded with the words – 'I am desired to intimate that His Honour may depend upon receiving the full and cordial support of the Governor-General-in-Council in continuing to act on the principle on which he has hitherto acted. On being apprised of the fact, the Indigo Planters' Association submitted their reply dated the 13th October 1860 in which they concluded as follows –

> "And, believing that different line of conduct on the part of the Government of Bengal would have led to a very different result to that which now exists, they submit these remarks to his Excellency, trusting that this matter is one of sufficient importance to attract to it careful consideration and his Excellency's earnest attention."

But the Governor-General-in-Council rejected the views of the planters as will appear from the following extract from letter No. 31 dated 24th November 1860 written by the Officiating Secretary to the Governor-General-in-Council.

> "The Governor-General concurs with the President in Council in considering that there is nothing in the letter of the 13th October from the Indigo Planters' Association which should affect the opinion already expressed by the Governor-General-in-Council that the conduct of the Bengal Government and of its Officers generally, has been marked by a strictly impartial administration of the law to all classes concerned."

The planters however were incorrigible. Sir H. S. Cunningham in his *'Life of Lord Canning'* observes as follows, in speaking of the urgent matters that drew the attention of the Viceroy at Calcutta. 'The Indigo planters, an important interest, by no means inclined to submit to an imagined grievance had raised a controversy as to their relation to the ryots, with whom they had to deal and whom they frequently oppressed.' On the 4th March 1861 their Association in Calcutta waited in deputation upon Lord Canning but to no effect. They carried the agitation against the Lieutenant Governor to England, and in a pamphlet, called "*Brahmins and Pariahs*" published in London 1861, they appealed to the British Government, Parliament, and People for protection from the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and made use of the following choice ex-

pressions against him in the frontispiece of the Pamphlet.

> "This high Officer has interfered with the free course of justice, has destroyed capital and trade of British Settlers of India and has created the present disastrous condition of incendiarism and insurrection now spreading in the rural districts of Bengal."

In the earlier part of the Pamphlet, the planters raked up the old quarrel – 'Civilians vs. British Settler,' as will be evident from the following extracts –

> "That a feeling of dislike to Settlers exists among Civilians; that the Civilians as distinguished from the Settlers are too much of a caste; and that the Covenanted Service is as it were the Nobility of India. Such have been the British Brahmins of India and the British Pariahs of India, as, after long enquiry, their conditions have been developed by the impartial judgement of a Committee of English Gentlemen. Those Nabobs were but too often extortionate Governors and corrupt Judges. They shook the pagoda tree as violently as they could and they made haste to become rich and to quit the country. But the few straggling Settlers who had found their way from England without being decorated with Company's Covenant, were Pariahs – the lowest of the law."

Sir John Peter Grant had been described as' the present high priest of the Civil Service Juggernaut' and his co-adjutors as 'Civil Lattials'. The diapason of abuse closed full in the concluding lines –

> "We asked to be relieved from the oppression of an ignorant and mischievous despot, who is running the finest country of the earth, who is even now rendering it necessary to take military occupation of the rural districts of Bengal, and who, if he remain your Minister, will soon bring matters to such a pass that you will have to make your choice between abandoning the country and holding it at the point of the bayonet."

Thier strenuous efforts however were not crowned with success. Both the Governor-General and the Secretary-of-State for India supported Sir John Peter Grant's Administration, as it will be evident from the Despatch of the Secretary-of-State on the Indigo Commission. He says –

> "I have further to express my entire concurrence in the opinion expressed by your Lordship and by the President in Council that the

conduct of the Bengal Government and of its Officers generally in the transaction under consideration has been marked by a strictly impartial administration of the law and that the Lieutenant-Governor was justly entitled to the full and cordial support afforded to him by your Lordship in Council."

Mr. J. Layard M.P. paid the following tribute to Sir John Peter Grant from his seat in the Parliament –

"A more impartial, a more statesmanlike document than that Minute (Grant's) it had never been his good fortune to read. No expense was spared to intimidate Lord Canning, Mr. Grant and other authorities in India, and every thing was done that could be done to influence public opinion in this country. A costly pamphlet had been circulated among the members of that House but he would not refer to it further than to say that a work which comprised more mendacity and audacity he never saw before in the whole course of the life."

Though the planters were baffled in their attempt to secure the support of the Ruling authorities, their representatives in the Press gave unbridled licence to their pens against their opponents among whom were included Sir John Peter Grant and his worthy co-adjutors. The English Newspapers which took up the cause of the planters were used to be called 'factory journals' for their general line of policy. Of these, we need make special mention of the *Englishman* and the *Bengal Hurkaru*. We give some extracts from the latter paper to give an idea to our readers of the language of contumely and vituperation freely indulged in.

"This is not the view Messrs. John Peter Grant & Co. are likely to take of it." "Messrs Grant Eden & Co." "The animus of Messrs Grant Eden Herschel and Seton Karr has been directed only against their countrymen not against the natives." "Mr. Grant-may now be said to be reaping. It is manufacturing season with him just at present. He sowed *perwannas*, he ploughed with Minutes, he harrowed us with Lushingtons and Herschels, and he is now reaping–blood." A description of a tidal bore began thus "with reference to the bore (not the great one J. P. G. of notoriety) brought to your notice."

The *Hindoo Patriot* of the day remarked that the 'Factory Press, had passed as a synonym for scurrility and abuse' and pointed out that

the charges against the Lieutenant Governor were notorious for their Billingsgate English. Even the Muses were invoked on the occasion. We give here the last stanza of an Ode headed 'Punch' which also appeared in the *Harkaru* –

"Governor Grant is a terrible man,
As he reigns in Alipore Hall;
A compound of Ghengis and Kublai Khan
Tamerlane, Nadir and all.
Says J.-P.
Grant Sez he
Drive me the planters into the sea."

Besides these they recommended in season and out of season the removal of Sir John Peter Grant from his high office.

Such was the abuse of the liberty of the Press. But this is not an isolated instance. It is said the strong tyrannise over the weak, all over the world and in all ages. History shews that whenever any champion takes up the cause of the weak against the strong, the latter hurl their lance against the hero. Sir John Peter Grant protected the weak ryots from the deadly grip of the strong Indigo-planters, the result was that he was bitterly cursed by the planters. But the days of excitement are no more and posterity has given its calm verdict, that Sir John Peter Grant saved Bengal during the Indigo crisis.

History repeats itself. We saw only the other day how another Ruler of a province was abused by the Press for taking up the cause of those confided to his care. The Hon'ble Sir Henry Cotton tried to guard the interest of the weak Coolies against the strong Tea planters, and he shared the fate of Sir John Peter Grant, though to a small extent. There seems to be a community of spirit, between the second Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and the retiring Chief Commissioner of Assam. And it is striking to note that on the eve of his departure from Assam the Hon'ble Mr. Cotton took the opportunity of paying his tribute of respect to the memory of Sir John Peter Grant. He says –

"I am old enough to remember how the most illustrious of Indian

Officials, Sir Frederick Halliday and Sir John Peter Grant were attacked with even greater virulence in their days for doing their duty. But time has triumphantly vindicated their reputation. I can afford to appeal to the same tribunal."

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Extracts from Sir John Peter Grant's Minute on the Report of the Indigo Commission referred to in page 33

Relations between planter and ryots

"31. The Commissioners next proceed to discuss the relations between the planter and the ryot; and under this head may be classed the following questions : the profitableness or unprofitableness of the crop to the ryot; the willingness or unwillingness of the ryot to grow it, and the means taken to induce the ryot to grow it, which includes the question of the oppressions which the ryot complains of.

Indigo cultivation unprofitable to the ryot.

32. The Commissioners pronounce conclusively that the cultivation is unprofitable to the ryot, supporting the conclusion by the consentaneous evidence of the planters themselves. This is indeed the one point upon which the whole indigo question turns; and it is not disputed. I do not find that the Commissioners have gone so far into this point as to settle to what degree, pecuniarily, the cultivation is unprofitable, though that it is so to a very extreme degree, is sufficiently apparent from the strength of the feeling against it, amongst those who would profit by it if it were profitable, and who ought to profit by it, and must profit by it, if it is to be carried on at all. There is, however, a great mass of most valuable evidence upon this point in the Appendix of the Report I have gone into it to satisfy my own mind upon this point, and the result has convinced me that the loss of the ryot in the cultivation of this crop on the high lands of Nadia and Jessore is, at the present time of agricultural high prices, greatly beyond even the general opinion on the subject. In a separate note appended to this Minute, I have referred to the evidence proving this. Rejecting all extreme cases and giving indigo the benefit of all doubts, I cannot put the absolute loss to the ryot at a low average, reckonning the net loss on the cultivation of Indigo at the highest price

now allowed, and the loss of the net profit the ryot would make by any other ordinary crop at the market price, at less than Rs. 7 a bigha, equivalent at the least to 7 times the rent of the land.

33. Now, if one remembers that these ryots are not Carolina slaves, but the free yeomanry of this country, and indeed strictly speaking, the virtual owners of the greater part of the land in the old cultivated parts of Bengal, so heavy a loss as this will fully account to us for the strength of the opposition to Indigo cultivation which we have just experienced. One-sixteenth of his whole land is a common proportion which, it is insisted, an indigo ryot shall sow in indigo. This is as though a farmer in Great Britain, farming under a long lease 160 acres of land, at a rent of £ 2 an acre, were, by some sort of pressure, forced to cultivate 10 acres, say in flax, which he was compelled to sell to a certain neighbouring manufacturer at a dead loss of £ 140 a year. This is precisely a parallel case, in the legal and economical view. In the social and political view, the case of a new English landlord, forcing a corresponding loss upon several thousand Irish cotters, would perhaps be a fairer illustration.

35. The most tangible of the incidental advantages sometimes put forward is an alleged benefit in the form of a low rent. But not a single

Rents

instance is advanced in which rents have been reduced by an indigo-planter on obtaining a lease or *taluk*. The extent of the claim goes no further than the assertion that indigo-planters refrain from raising the rents. But as to this, also few instances are advanced in which a neighbouring Zemindar has raised his rents, whilst those of indigo ryots were not raised. In the concerns of Mr. Hills in Nadia, the rents, I understand, have not been raised to the *pargana* standard. On the whole, I think it very probable that there may be some reality, in certain cases, in this alleged incidental advantage; and it is to me a subject of consolation to think that a moderate, proper, and lawful increase of rents, may be a compensation to some planters who hold tenures of land, and may be constrained to abandon the indigo manufacture. But it is to be remembered that the rents of a very large class of ryots cannot be raised at all; that no rents can be raised except under due form and process of law; and that rents cannot be raised arbitrarily, or beyond certain determinable rates, when raised at all; whilst no reasonable increase of a rent upon 16 bighas would be to the ryot equivalent to a loss of Rs. 7 upon one bigha.

36. To the indigo-planter holding a tenure, indeed, the case will

be different. The evidence goes to show that the market value of the indigo dye made from the average produce of a bigha of land does not, at most, exceed Rs. 10. The net profit of the manufacturer, under any system of payment for the raw plant, must of course be very much less. It may well be that to him, therefore, a moderate, proper and lawful increase of rent upon 16 or 20 bighas of land, will be a compensation for all the profit possible from the indigo of one bigha; and, if this should be the case, all parties would have great cause to rejoice.

37. On the actual question of facts as to the dislike of ryots to indigo cultivation on the old system, the Report of this Commission is conclusive as to the intensity of the feeling. Indeed the Report, which in the mildness of its tone is admirable, can give but a faint impression of the intensity of the feeling on the ryot's part, compared to that which a reader will derive from a perusal of the appended evidence of the ryots themselves, and of the Missionaries who, living in unconstrained private intercourse with the ryots around them, know the feelings of the whole class of ryots better than any other Europeans do.

Intense dislike of the ryots to indigo cultivation.

40. The Commission show that the bait of advances is not now operative to bring new men into the factory books; cases of fresh advances to new men being of very rare occurrence. Sons succeeding to their father's property, and debts, are said to conceive the impression that they are liable for their father's engagements and so are pursuaded to sow. The price allowed for an average crop of indigo not being, in the vast majority of cases, enough to clear the advances, and the heavy charges for seed, stamps, & c. the debt increases constantly. The average produce is stated by planters to be 8 or 9 or 10 bundles a bigha. The average price fixed is shown to be between 5 and 6 bundles for the rupee; the highest anywhere given being 4 bundles. But when there is a balance against the ryot, as there is in the vast majority of cases, a small part only of the 2 rupees is really advanced, that is to say, is paid in cash, the remainder being merely transferred in account. The charges are from 4 annas to 8 annas a bigha for seed; 2 to 4 or even 8 annas for stamps, and in many cases 4 to 7 or even to 13 annas a bigha for carting. Of 33,200 indigo ryots who cultivated for the Bengal Indigo Company's concerns in 1858–59 only 2,448 were shown by Mr. Larmour to have received any payment for plant delivered be-

Means of inducement to grow indigo.

yond the trifle of cash advanced. Many written engagements contain a clause that any balance shall be paid, not in money, but in Indigo, at the low rate fixed. These I gather are the lawful, or quasi-lawful, means of insisting on the ryots, or families of ryots, who have once touched an advance, continuing to cultivate. But against so strong a motive of self-interest as there is in the ryot's mind for not cultivating indigo, lawful and quasi-lawful means of inducement were necessarily of little power. Consequently contracts seem to a great extent to have fallen into desuetude, luckily for the ryots, and other means in many cases have heen exclusively relied upon. Babu Jai Chand Pal Chaudhury, a great zeminder, who is or was also a great indigo-planter (having had 32 concerns in his estate and shares in 9 other concerns) is asked; "if the ryots have for the last 20 years been unwilling to sow indigo, how then have they gone on cultivating the plant up to the present time?" To this he answers "by numerous acts of oppression and violence, by locking them up in godowns, burning their houses, beating them &." The whole of this gentleman's evidence is very instructive as proceeding from a great zamindar and practical native indigo-planter. This diluted into becoming official language, I find to be the conclusion of the Commission; and it is certainly the inevitable deduction from the whole body of evidence.

41. The question of the alleged oppression and unlawful violence practised upon ryots, in relation to indigo cultivation, though from its nature it has naturally attracted a greater degree of public attention than any other part of the whole subject, is but a branch of the last point discussed, namely the means taken to induce people to undertake the cultivation of what to them is a very unprofitable crop.

What are the proved evils to be remedied.

62. Before remarking upon the recommendations in detail, it will be well to look back, in order to ascertain what are exactly the proved evils requiring to be met by such action. It is impossible to judge of the suitableness of a remedy, till we have a clear conception of what it is exactly that requires to be remedied. If we have but a confused, incorrect, and inadequate notion of the real evils, our remedies will be useless and perhaps hurtful.

Planter's complaints.

63. There is nothing in the evidence to prove that before this year planters experienced any material difficulty in getting ryots to sow in indigo the quantity of land required of them, for which cash advances were actually taken whether such requisition was supported by a

contract as the planter would generally hold, or was the mere command of the planters, as the ryot would often hold. There are no longer now complaints that ryots take advances for indigo from one planter and sell the produce to another; nor is it the staple of the complaints made before this year, that the ryots took advances for indigo and cultivated on their own account something else instead. There are general charges that ryots are of a fraudulent and evasive disposition, but I have seen in the whole evidence no specific charge of the above nature, in a single instance, before this year.

64. There are, however, on the part of the planters, loud complaints of the carelessness of the ryot, after taking advances, in regard to his indigo crop; of his inattention to it, and of his indifference as to whether it is eaten down by cattle, or choked up by weeds, or goes into the planter's vat, notwithstanding the daily urging of the planter's servents. I cannot doubt that this is a true complaint.

65. And there are complaints that ryots sometimes cannot be got to engage for indigo because of the machinations of third parties. But of this I find no proof; and I see no reason to think the complaint well founded because no motive needs to be looked for, when a ryot refuses, beyond his own self-interest. I find no other complaints on the part of the planters.

Ryots' complaints.

66. On the part of the ryots the complaints are that, by oppression and acts of unlawful violence in themselves very harassing, they are compelled to engage to cultivate indigo or to cultivate it without engagement, for the planter, at a nominal price, which even if fully paid would be ruinously unprofitable. The fact of frequent acts of unlawful violence and oppression is fully proved; and the motive is manifest; also the extreme inadequacy of the price paid by the planter, and the unwillingness with which indigo is cultivated by the ryot, are fully proved.

67. Also the ryots complain that the deductions from the nominal price are so heavy, the unfairness of weighing so great the extortions of the factory *amla* so excessive, that the nominal price dwindles to little or nothing, so that if they realise from the whole produce of their indigo land, in cash, what pays the rent of the land they are luckly; wherefore they lose the whole value of that land to themselves besides all the costs of cultivating it for the planter. And this appears to me, from a careful

examination of the evidence, to be about the true state of the case, as a question of profit and loss to the ryot.

68. It is also made matter of complaint, though I think more by the friends of the ryot than by the ryots themselves, that the ryot is constrained to cultivate indigo by reason of the debt claimed from him by the factory, on account of the balance of account being against 9 ryots out of 10 always.

Breaches of the peace

69. On the part of the Magistrate, it is fully proved that the peace of the country is constantly broken by disputes about indigo, to so great an extent as to be a discredit to our Administration.

74. As to the complaints of the ryots, it is obvious that the practical and effectual protection of the law for person, property and rights, with absolute freedom of trade, is all that is required to remove the grounds of them. And the same may be said of the Magistrate's complaint which is the consequence only of the inadequate protection he has been able, until lately, practically to afford to the people.

Minor points in Minute of Messrs Temple and Furgusson.

92. The separate Minute, signed by Mr. Temple and Mr. Fergusson, treats of some points not noticed in the Report. These 2 gentlemen remark that district Magistrates have ample power to investigate and prosecute British subjects in the *mufassal*, and that they ought to exercise that power. This is true, though the trial (except in cases of simple assault punishable by a fine of Rs. 500) under the present law can only be at the Presidency. In grave cases, I trust that this duty is never neglected. But the expense both to the public and to private persons of a prosecution at the Presidency for an offence committed at a distance, is very heavy; and the inconvenience and loss to prosecutors and witnesses are so great, that such prosecutions are a misfortune to the neighbourhood, in which the person injured is the most certain sufferer. It is not in the nature of thing that these considerations should not operate to a certain extent, as an exemption from amenability to all Criminal Law, in minor matters.

Mr. Fergusson's Minute

93. The body of the Report is signed by 4 members. The fifth Mr. Fergusson, the able representative of the planting interest in the Commission, has not signed it, and has put in a separate

Minute, explaining his reasons, I understand that his dissent, in the main, is to the tone of the Report, which in his opinion leads to the inference that planters, as a body, are lawless. The inference, I myself draw from the Report is, that the planters as a body, and naturally, are like any other class of our fellow-countrymen; but that, being within the meshes of a false system, in all that concerns that system, they cannot but act as the system constrains them. Like all such bodies they comprise men of all temperaments; but it is and has been my conviction that there are in this body many as good men as any in India, and I see nothing in the Report to the contrary. Mr. Fergusson objects, to certain views in the Report, as tending to disturb the acknowledged principles of the Permanent Settlement, and to give ryots notions of their rights, incompatible with that contract between Government and the zemindar. I conceive that there is here some of that misapprehension of the nature of the Permanent Settlement, which is very common. That measure in no respect differs from any other Indian revenue settlement, except in being permanent, instead of for a term of years. It is only a settlement of the Government demand of Revenue. It in no way touches any rights, interests or tenures of land, all which it leaves as it found them. It is truly described as a contract between Government and the zemindar; and therefore necessarily it could not affect third parties, whose rights and interests, indeed, it acknowledges especially, and excepts in terms. Mr. Fergusson freely admits that the recent crisis must sooner or later have occurred, because planters did not rise their prices as other prices rose. He comes thus, I think, in effect, to the same practical conclusion that the majority of the Commission and I myself come to, namely, that root of the whole question is the struggle to make ryots grow indigo plant, without paying them the price of it.

Conclusion.

94. My high opinion of the manner in which the Commission have conducted their inquiries, and reported to Government their conclusions, upon this extensive and long controverted subject, has been expressed to the gentlemen who composed it, in a separate letter. At a moment of passionate excitement, the careful impartiality with which they conducted their inquiries was admitted on all sides. And though every one will form his own judgement as to their conclusions and recommendations, the cautious, temperate and kindly manner in which they have framed their Report, will, I am sure, be cordially, acknowledged by every one."

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CHAPTER IV

LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION

The relation between planters and ryots was of a dual character. First, they were two contracting parties entering into a bargain in which the planters used to make some advances or *daudans* to the ryots for the growing of the plant. Secondly, they were landlords and tenants, as most of the planters had acquired *zemindaris, taluks* and other *putni* tenures.

In their character as landlord, the planters enjoyed with other zemindars the rights granted by the Permanent Settlement and other Regulations and Acts by which was governed the relation of landlord and tenant. The power vested in the zemindars were immense, and in some cases, they were shamefully abused both by the zemindars and their underlings, to the ruin of the rack-rented ryot. The Regulations most injurious to the interest of the peasantry were the Regulations VII of 1799, and V of 1812, commonly known as *Huftum and Puncham* Regulations.

The Draconian rigour of the former Law, as far as the ryots were concerned, will appear from the following extracts :–

> "II. The *zemindars, Talookdars,* and other *landholders* and farmers of land, empowered by secction II of Regulation XVII 1793, to distrain the crops, cattle, and other personal property of their undertenants, for arrears of rent, are authorized to delegate to their naibs, gomastahs, and other agents employed in the collection of their rents, the power of distraining in their behalf.
>
> XV. First. Any landholder or farmer to whom an arrear of rent may be due from an under-tenant which cannot be realised by distress may cause the arrest of the defaulter and his security in the manner following.
>
> XV. Fifth. Defendant to be kept in close custody if the arrear demanded, be found due from him.
>
> XV. Eighth. But it is hereby declared, that no part of the existing Regulation was meant to deprive the zemindar and other landholders of the power of summoning, and if necessary, compelling the attendance of their tenants for the adjustment of their rents, or for any other purpose, or of measuring any land within their respective estates, which

may be liable to measurement, under the conditions upon which such land may have been leased or held."

A writer in the *Calcutta Review* vol VI, P. 341, denounced the Regulations as follows –

> "But like every thing else they have their abuses, and have been rendered instruments of great oppression to the peasantry. The abuses arise in great measure from the character of the zeminders and the Indigo planters, who take *putnees* and *ijarahs* and the machinery employed for enforcing the Regulations in question."

These enactments were a double blessing to the planters; for in them they found additional ready means of compulsion as regarded acceptance of indigo *dauduns* or advances. When the great Rent Act (Act X of 1859, which has been called the Magna Charta of the ryots, repealed those Regulations, and defined and settled many important principles connected with the rights and obligations of landlord and tenant, the planters contributed their quota of opposition and complaint to the new law, as interfering with their manorial influence over the ryot. The Commissioners pointed out in their Report that the Chief ground of complaint was Section XI.

> "The power heretofore vested in zemindars and other land holders of compelling the attendance of their tenants for the adjustment of their rents or for any other purpose is withdrawn, and all such persons are prohibited from adopting any means of compulsion for enforcing payments of the rents due to them, other than are authorised by the provisions of this Act."

But though the Act was a boon to the ryots in some respects, it entailed a new misery on them in the enhancement of rent. Sir W. W. Hunter says in the Nuddea Volume of his Statistical Account 'that the operation of Act X of 1859 has resulted in a general enhancement of rents and this increase has been most marked in those parts of the district where the indigo planters are landlords.' This leads one to observe that when the poor ryot gets rid of Charybdis he falls into Scylla.

Next comes the Law as to the breaches of contract. We have sketched in a previous chapter, the early law on the subject. We have now to deal with the passing of the Act XI of 1860, which came into operation on

the 4th April 1860. The first ten sections of the Act relate to the summary powers given to Magistrates. It will be seen from the following analytical abstract of the Sections, given by Mr. Theobald in his edition of the Act, what great indulgence was shown to the planters.

1, 2. Ryot having received a cash advance for cultivation of Indigo during now current season, and not cultivating according to agreement may be summoned before Magistrate; who (2) if the complaint is established may assess damages, and order payment or specific performance of contract, and may attach the land to be cultivated, if set out by the contract; and ryot on default of obediĕnce to order may be imprisoned, and damges may be levied on his property.

3, 4. Complaint to be dismissed, if agreement is obtained by fraud, force, or intimidation; and (4) on dismissal for any cause, Magistrate may order complainant to pay costs and compensation.

5. Any person by violence, threats or otherwise intimidating a ryot to break his engagement shall be liable to imprisonment or fine or both.

6. Any person maliciously destroying, or damaging or commanding another to destroy etc. any growing crop of indigo, shall be liable to imprisonment or fine or both.

7. No appeal to lie from decision of Magistrate.

8. Persons vested with powers of Magistrate and Assistant and Deputies specially empowered by Government may exercise powers under the Act.

9. Decision of Magistrate to be a bar : and to have force only in regard to things of current season.

10. Act to have effect from 4th April, 1860, and only within territories of Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Complaints under it to be preferred in six months.

The only justification of the Act could be based on the ground, that extreme cases require extreme remedies. And that was the reason why even Sir John Peter Grant supported the enactment. To do justice to him we give below the opening para of his letter to the Legislative Member

for Bengal, in which he recommended the introduction of the law.

"That there is ground for believing that a great commercial calamity is threatened by the feeling which has suddenly manifested itself among Indigo Ryots to repudiate their agreements to cultivate indigo, although advances have been made to and accepted by them only a short time ago, in the usual manner, and upon the usual understanding namely that, they should cultivate indigo for the planters at the usual rates. *** It appears to me that a law giving a very summary but still a fair trial, and inflicting penal damages on the party who after a fair trial is found to be determined wilfully to break his engagements is both justifiable and proper. But I am of opinion that no law that could be framed regarding indigo planting at the present moment should be more than temporary. We see that the present struggle on the part of the ryots is to avoid the cultivation of Indigo. From this it is certain that ryots who cultivate Indigo are forced to do so by illegitimate coercion.

The system was such, the sooner or later a crisis was certain; it has now come in the natural course of things, and there is no longer an excuse for shirking the disclosure of the disease, and the application of the remedy. For these reasons I could recommend no Law other than a temporary Law, and no Law of any sort unless its promulgation to the ryots may be accompanied with a promise of full and thorough enquiry into past practice, and thereafter of a well considered Law which shall afford practically equal and complete protection to the ryots as well as to the planter."

Sir John Peter Grant took all the precautions he could for the proper and impartial administration of the Law. In cases of doubt opinions of the Advocate General were obtained and circulated among the Officers concerned. He issued instructions to the Commissioners of Nuddea and Rajshye, to whose Divisions was practically confined the operation of the Act. He wrote to them :–

"As the Legislature allows no appeal from the decisions of Officers vested with powers under this Act, it becomes doubly incumbent on Commissioners to keep themselves constantly informed of the manner in which those Officers discharge the very difficult and responsible duty now imposed upon them, and of the principles by which they were guided in their decisions. These powers, and the opportunity of acting upon them, must not be retained for a day in the hands of any Officer who

may show himself not competent to exercise them in such a manner as to do full and substantial justice to all parties."

These instructions were not meant to be only formal and idle, for we find that no sooner Sir John Peter Grant learnt from the Report of the Commissioner of Nuddea Division that one Mr. G. C. D. Betts, a Deputy Magistrate attached to the Krisnagore District sentenced a *Mooktear* named Teetoram Chakraberty, to six months' imprisonment with labour and a fine of Rs. 200 under a wrong interpretation of the Law and also upon insufficient evidence, than he ordered the immediate release of the person and the refund of the fine. Mr. Betts was at once removed from the District, though the innocent victim had to remain in prison for sixteen days. During the short period that the Act was in force, the Lieutenant Governor released sixteen persons, sentenced to imprisonment under the Act. All these showed the parental care of Sir John Peter Grant, but at the same time proved what a prolific source of oppression the new Act was in the hands of unscrupulous Magistrates. The Indian Field of the 21st April 1860, said of the working of the Act as follows –

> "In Jessore it has been most oppressive in practice. The Planters of the District, having the ears of the Hakims, have succeded in completely crushing the ryots. The Fouzdary Adawlats have been converted into veritable inquisitions and have adopted the most illegal and arbitrary measures for the forcible cultivation of Indigo. Fields cultivated with Rubbee and Chenna have been ploughed up by *Tagitgeers and Ameens,* and resown with Indigo."

The Magistrate of the District was Mr. E. W. Molony and the Joint Magistrate, Mr. C. B. Skinner. In consequence of the article in the Indian Field, their doings were made the subject of official enquiry and the Lieutenant Governor was obliged to record that it was impossible to pronounce that these Magisterial proceedings were otherwise than unsatisfactory. The planters, from their side, complained against the proceedings of Mr. Herschel, Magistrate of Krisnagore, with reference to the administration of the Act, but the Lieutenant Governor recorded that he had done his duty according to justice and law and deserved all the credit and support the Government could give him. It was strikingly pointed out by Mr. E. H. Lushington, Commissioner of the Nuddea Division that the Bengal Indigo Association and other gentlemen greatly

interested in the cultivation of the crop were universal in the praises of Mr. Molony and in the condemnation of Mr. Herschel's system of management. We are tempted to say it will be in keeping with official records, if we identify the district of "Amarnagore" in the drama Nil Durpan with Krishnagore under the Magistracy of Mr. Herschel.

The atmosphere of Bengal was surcharged with electricty but the surroundings beyond the seas were serene enough. Accordingly the Secretary of State for India objected to the Act on principle and did not like to see it continue. The operation of the Act ceased on 4th October 1860.

The planters however tried their best to have an Act of that nature. They were so far successful that a Bill was introduced early in 1861 by the Hon'ble Mr. Cecil Beadon to provide for the punishment of breaches of contract for the cultivation, production, gathering, provision, manufacture, carriage, and delivery of agricultural produce. The *Hindoo Patriot* remarked as follows when the Act was brought on the Legislative anvil :–

> "Indeed, who could think for a moment, when the Commission closed its labours, that the Supreme Government of the country would, contrary to solemn promises, and belying universal expectation recommend the enactment of a law far surpassing in one-sided severity the Act XI of 1860, and sanction the investiture of the Magistrates with powers a hundredth part of which sufficed to keep the population of the Indigo districts in serfage ?"

There was an acrimonious debate on the subject in the Legislative Council but the ultimate issue was with the British Government and the people. The Bill was transmitted to the Secretary of State for his sanction. Sir Charles Wood in his despatch to the Governor General on the 18th April 1861 was not prepared to subject to criminal proceedings matters which have always been held as coming exclusively under the jurisdiction of civil tribunals and requested the withdrawal of the proposed legislation.

Mr. Layard brought the subject to the notice of the House of Commons and denounced the introduction of the Act on behalf of the silent and suffering ryots. The reply of Sir Charles Wood was worthy of the occasion and sealed the fate of the impending legislation. He said that

he trusted that when the Indian Government received his despatch they would of their own accord withdraw the Bill, but at any date he had expressed his desire that if not withdrawn before, it should be withdrawn on the receipt of the despatch. The measure was accordingly abandoned.

The matter however did not rest here. It was clear from the despatch of the Secretary of State for India that no special legislation for the coercion of the ryot would be countenanced by an enlightened public in England. Attempt was then made for the passing of a law in which the real object of coercing the ryot was kept concealed. Such was the Bill introduced in the newly formed Supreme Council by the Hon'ble Mr. W. Ritchie on the 12th February 1862. It was relating to breaches of contract committed in bad faith. Among other things it was proposed to imprison defaulters in civil contract at the expense of the Government, on failure to pay damages decreed against him and also to make his property continue liable until the decree had been satisfied. The Hindoo Patriot justly observed that 'the general character given to the Bill was necessary to make it a peg on which to hang a rope for the neck of the ryots'. The subterfuge however did not escape the searching eye of Sir Charles Wood who recorded in his despatch dated the 6th June 1862, that the demand for this law had obviously sprung out of the relations between the Indigo planters and the ryots of Lower Bengal. The objections to the Bill were in his opinion of so serious a character that it was impossible for him to approve of the measure. He trusted that the Bill would be at once withdrawn. The despatch set at rest for ever the clamour for a contract law. The Bill was formally withdrawn on the 10th December 1862 on the report of the Select Committee which was presented by the Hon'ble Mr. H. S. Maine afterwards Sir Henry Sumner Maine.

Another legislative measure was proposed, more dreadful in its nature than the coercion Act of 1860 described before. The Hon'ble Mr. C. E. Buckland says in his "Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governor", that the violence of indigo ryots as complained by planters, consisted in –

> "Wilful destruction of indigo crops by cattle; and the commission of outrage on their servants and property by large masses of people in

which it was difficult to obtain individual conviction".

With a view to mitigate the evils alleged, a Bill was introduced in the nascent Bengal Council on the 29th March 1862 to authorise the imposition of fines on villages and communites. This was talked of as the "Village Fining Act." The Hon'ble Mr. W. Maitland, President of the Landholder's and Commercial Association, cited English law which imposed an obligation on Counties and Hundreds in Great Britain, as being similar to that proposed in the Bill. The attitude of the Council led the *Hindoo Patriot* to compare it with the 'House of Kentucky of Carolina Legislature' and to forget that the Council was presided over by a man who had won the title of the Liberator of the Indigo Slave.

The monstrous nature of the Bill will be evident from the first Section which provides –

> "If it shall be proved to the satisfaction of a magistrate that the inhabitants of any village or villages or members of any community within his jurisdiction or any large number of them have wilfully and in combination with one another committed all or any part of the offences defined in sections 143, 146, 425 & 441 of the Indian Penal Code, or been guilty of abetment (as defined in the said Code) of any of the said offences, it shall be lawful for such Magistrate to impose a fine upon the inhabitants of such village or villages or upon the members of such community or upon any specified class or caste of the said inhabitants or members."

Indeed, it is painful to note that, on the eve of Sir John Peter Grant's administration, a measure should have been brought in his Council, and apparently with his approbation, which was opposed to the fundamental priciples of the Criminal Jurisprudence of England. It was suggested in palliation, that the measure was forced upon him, but his share and responsibility for the Bill had been pointed out by the Hindoo Patriot in the following remarks which give an impartial estimate of the situation :–

> "We are aware that the measure was extorted from him by a high political pressure. The noisy agitators of the Landholder's and Commerical Association openly sympathised with by the Supreme Council under the leadership of Sir Bartle Frere and Mr. Laing would not be satisfied with any concession save the total surrendering of the ryotry to

their tender mercies. Sir John Peter Grant, who has hitherto fought the fight so nobly in the cause of the ryots, found himself at last unequal to the contest, particularly when he found the Supreme Government in the ranks of the opposition. Thus placed on the two horns of a dilemma, he for once followed Falstaff's principle that prudence was the better part of valour, and kept the planters in good humour by promising the sweeping measure."

After all, the Bill was rejected on the 13th December 1862, during the administration of Sir Cecil Beadon. Sir Ashly Eden was then a member of the Bengal Council, and to him belonged the honour of formally withdrawing the Bill. It is striking to note, as had been pointed out by the *Patriot,* that to the author of the Indigo Revolution, was fitly assigned the task of giving a decent burial, to a measure, which was opposed to the vital principle of that revolution.

The transition from legislation to litigation is not abrupt. And we take in hand, the law suits connected with the indigo question. The first and foremost was the celebrated trial of the 'Nil Durpan case' which will be dealt with fully in the next chapter. One result of the *Nil Durpan Trial* was, that the Supreme Court became the planters' vantage ground for crushing their enemies with flaming volley of law. The 'Political Judges' of the Court as the *Hindoo Patriot* of the time described them, showed their readiness to extend a helping hand, and the planters were shrewd enough to transfer their right with the Government into the arena of the Supreme Court. Hardly had the excitement of the *Nil Durpan Trial* subsided when another libel case was instituted against no less a person than Sir John Peter Grant, the Ruler of the Province. In a volume called "Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal – No. XXXIII Part III. Papers relating to Indigo Cultivation in Bengal," and published under the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, appeared a letter No. 210 C.T. sated the 7th August 1860. The letter was addressed by E. H. Lushington Esq. Offg. Commissioner of the Nuddea Division, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, in connection with a very serious affray in which a murder was committed. Mr. Lushington wrote in para 7 as follows :–

"I greatly regret, from circumstances detailed by Mr. Skinner, of

Mr. John Macarthur, the superintendent of the Factory (of Luckhipassa), being sick and absent at the time the affray took place, and of Mr. Driver also, the superintendent of the Concern (the Meergunge Concern), being several miles distant, that it is apparently out of the question to commit either of the persons, as having taken a criminal part in this most disgraceful occurrence, with any hope of securing a conviction, though it is quite impossible to suppose, from the fact of the *Lattials* being publicly assembled in the factory and thence going out armed to fight in an equally open manner, that such lawless acts could have been done without the previous knowledge or consent of one or both of them."

Mr. Macarthur and other offenders were put on their trial. But for want of sufficient evidence they were acquitted. Mr. Macarthur then brought a suit for damages in the Supreme Court, against Sir John Peter Grant for having published the above para which contained a libel, against him, without reasonable excuse. The damages were laid at Rs. 10,000, to compensate, as the *Hindoo Patriot* remarked, for the heavy losses sustained by the factory during the late strike. The plea of privileged communication was taken by the Advocate General, though to no effect. The Chief Justice Sir Barnes Peacock delivered judgement on the 16th May 1862 after Sir John Peter Grant had laid down the reins of Government, and assigned nominal damages of one rupee. The judgement fully discussed the law as to privileged communications, and cannot fail to be of great interest, being the finding of one of the most eminent lawyers that graced the Bench. We give the judgement at the end of the chapter, as it appeared in the *Hindoo Patriot* reproduced from the *Phœnix*.

While the case against the Lieutenant Governor was pending, the planters aimed a shot against another victim but it missed its mark as he was beyond striking distance. The victim was no other person than the Editor of the *Hindoo Patriot* – the immortal Hurish Chandra Mookerjee. He raised a regular crusade against the oppression of the planters and helped the ryots of Bengal in their hour of affliction, both with his pen and purse. The people of Bengal will ever remain grateful for what he did and worship his sacred memory in the sanctum of their hearts. Verily the *Bengalee* of the days of the late Grish Chandra Ghose wrote, "He made tremendous sacrifice of his time and money for maintaining and editing the "*Patriot*" and died a pauper for the cause of his country. No

other native of India since his time has been able to show that amount of self-sacrifice for the good of his native land." His humble homestead at Bhowanipure was always open to receive aggrieved persons of all classes and he disinterestedly toiled for their welfare. It may be said of him that he showed not only by his writings but also by his example what a Hindoo Patriot should do. He never ceased from bringing to the notice of the public and of the Government, cases of outrage, high-handedness, and tryanny. It was in connection with this mission of his that the present suit was instituted.

It was believed all over Nuddea that one Huromony a peasant girl, who was looked upon as one of the beauties of Krisnagore, was carried off one day, while going to fetch water by a planter's servants, to the Katchikatta factory. One Mr. Archibald Hills, was then the manager, or *chhota saheb* of the factory under the general superintendence of Mr. J. Forlong. It was reported that he was present at the scene of occurrence and rode after the party. It was also alleged that Mr. Hills had kept her in his room till about 11.30 P.M. and had then sent her back in a *palki* with closed doors. The story was told by the Rev. C. Bomwetsch, before the Commission. The President Mr. Seton-Karr, requested the Magistrate of Krisnagore to enquire about the correctness of the story. Mr. W. J. Herschel, the Magistrate who had gone closely into the evidence in regard to the case, said in his reply that the abduction seemed very clearly proved, though no other charge was tenable. It seems probable that the case of Haromony gave the cue to the author of Nil Durpan for the story of the abduction of Khetramony whose rescue has given us one of the most memorable scenes in the domain of fiction.

The *Hindoo Patriot* in one of its issues gave currency to the story and denounced Mr. Hills, for having forced her person. Mr. Hills sought the refuge of the Supreme Court which was denied, for want of jurisdiction. He therefore filed a suit for damages in the Court of the Principal Sudder Ameen of the District of 24 Perganahs, and valued the suit at Rs. 10,000. While the suit was pending, Babu Harish Chandra died, but the vindictiveness of the planter continued, and overcame the English instinct of chivalry. The widow of the illustrious deceased was made a defendant, and the proceedings went on. However the case was ulti-

mately compromised. Mr. Hills withdrew the whole claim for damages and the widow had to pay Rs. 1000 as costs. It was most unfortunate that the great Harish Ch. did not live long enough to vindicate his conduct but died in the thick of the fight. His services were thus lost to his countrymen when their need was the sorest. The *Hindoo Patriot* of 1862, spoke thus of the settlement of the suit :–

> "The great libel case against the *Hindoo Patriot* or rather its former proprietor terminated at the Alipore Court in a manner which has transported the Indigo Faction to the Seventh heaven of rejoicing. We cannot however felicitate our planter friends on the result when it is remembered that the master spirit, which lent its giant strength to the working out of the great social revolution in Lowci Bengal has unhappily taken flight to its long home. We have been informed that the evidence did not support the charges against Mr. Hills personally, still it disclosed facts about the Indigo system which when published will do the work of a second Indigo Commission."

The people of Nuddea in which the alleged event happened, were not silent in their recognition of the services rendered by the illustrious dead when the district was under the fetters of Indigo factories. A meeting was held in Krisnagore on the 26th July 1862 to do honour to the memory of Hurish Ch. Mookerjee and raise subscriptions in aid of the memorial Fund started in Calcutta. The subscription list was of a most representative character. It was headed by Maharaja Bahadur Shuttesh Ch. Roy and contained contributions of ryots themselves. We find from the *Bengalee* of 1876 that the meeting was organised by the late Rai Denobandhu Mitra, who was then a Superintendent of Post Offices in Nuddea. The foremost names that have come down to posterity as friends and benefactors of the Factory Slaves in Bengal are those of Hurish Ch. Mookerjee and Denobandhu Mitra. And we are delighted to behold the spectacle of the author of Nil Durpan playing the part of a high priest in the Hurish worship at Krishnagore.

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SUPREME COURT – MAY 16, 1862.

John MacArthur vs. Sir J. P. Grant.

His Lordship directed his remarks as to whether or no there was any justification in publishing privileged communications or circulating them. That the extract concerning Mr. MacArthur was a privileged communication there could be no doubt. Not even the House of Commons could publish to the public any communication which was privileged. He mentioned a case in which a member of the House of Commons, was prosecuted for publishing, something addressed to him, apart from the proceedings of the House, containing, as it proved to be, matter of a defamatory nature to some individual concerned. Damages were awarded against this member of the House of Commons, and he thought very justly. On the same ruling it was quite clear that if the House of Commons received a memorial reflecting against the character of an individual, and published the same in any shape other than the usual Proceedings of the House, in any pamphlet form, or public newspaper, it would become an actionable case if the allegations in the memorial turn out to be false. If, then the House of Commons is not at liberty to publish any thing defamatory of any individual, save and except as in duty bound, as embodied in the Proceedings of the House, it follows the Lieutenant Governor can have no power to publish Selections from the Records of the Government reflecting upon any individual. Now, suppose an individual was to write a private letter to the Lieutenent Governor, saying that he believed a murder was committed in the factory he lived in, and that A.B., was the person who perpetrated the deed, asking authority at the same time to offer a reward of a £ 100 for the apprehension of A.B., who had fled from the District. Accordingly the Lieutenant Governor issues a proclamation in the name of Government for the apprehension of A.B., and publishes the letter in the shape of Selections bound in a volume, or in the public newspapers. Now, if A.B., is actually the offender, the Lieutenant Governor could not but be justified in publishing the information in any shape he pleased. But if the case turned out otherwise *i.e.*, if A.B. had not committed the murder, then the Lieutenant Governor would certainly be liable to be prosecuted for libel.

It has been attempted to be shown that Mr. Grant had wilfully circulated the libel, after he had read the decision of Mr. Steer who acquitted MacArthur of the alleged crime. Mr. Walter Brett was put into the witness box to prove that Mr. Grant took in the Englishman a day before Mr. Steer's decision was published and for the purpose of proving that Mr. Grant read that decision and after that fact distributed copies of the book containing the libel. His Lordship was bound to say that as far as the question of libel or no libel went, there can be doubt that it was, although it was possible, nay probable, that the Lieutenant Governor never knew that the book before the Court even contained the passage against Mr. MacArthur. It was very possible that the passage was permitted to stand a part of the book without Mr. Grant's knowledge or permission. But, for all that, he is responsible for that passage as it occurs in a work published under him and by his authority. The fact of the book being circulated to select parties does not alter the case in any way. It is clearly laid down that if a defamatory document, being a part of the Record of the Government, is published in any shape other than as the proceedings of the House either in pamphlet form or bound in a volume and circulated among a few, or in a newspaper for the full gaze of the public, the publisher is liable for libel committed. It would appear also that upon the requisition of the Secretary to the Landholders and Commercial Association of which Mr. MacArthur was a member, Mr. Seton-Karr delivered to the gentleman six copies of the Selections from the Government of Bengal Part III. The Court upon all these facts think that Mr. Grant has published a defamatory matter against Mr. MacArthur without any legal cause or reason. The next point the Court have to consider is whether Mr. Grant in publishing that libel entertained "malice in fact" *i.e.*, wilful intention by the publication of the libel, to injure the character of Mr. MacArthur or simply "malice in Law" which is inferred from the bare circumstance of the publication of the passage against Mr. MacArthur. From all that was before the Court his Lordship was bound to confess he believed there was no ground for supposing that Mr. Grant entertained "malice in fact" in the case. The Lieutenant Governor was here and he candidly avowed the libel. He came here for the purpose of boldly meeting the case in the face, he has not attempted in any way to screen himself from the consequences. He has not told us

that the passage reflecting on Mr. MacArthur was put in without his knowledge, or that he was not responsible for the accidental insertion of the said passage, or any thing else that would lead us to believe that he tried to shirk away the slightest amount of responsibility that rested on his shoulders and his alone. The fact also of Mr. Seton-Karr sending six copies to Mr. Fergusson the Secretary of the Landholders and Commercial Association goes to prove that Mr. Grant did not attempt to evade any consequences that might occur upon the publication of Mr. Steer's decision from the Sudder Board. The Court was of opinion upon these facts that there could be no two opinions as to the motive of the Lieutenant Governor. There was nothing to show that Mr. Grant wished to injure Mr. MacArthur in any way, *i.e.*, he entertained no "malice in fact," but certainly the malice which the law assumes from the mere fact of publication.

The decision of the Court being such upon this point, we next come to the question of damages. His Lordship here cited several authorities to prove that in such a case as was before the Court, not only was it imperative upon the plaintiff to prove "malice in fact" on the part of the defendant, but also when the Court came to consider the question of damages to prove what amount of injury, if any, was sustained by the plaintiff, personal injury and injury done to his character. Now the question is what injury has Mr. MacArthur suffered by the publication of the Selections from the Government of Bengal No. III ? Mr. MacArthur has not been into the witness box to prove that he had sustained the slightest amount of injury, personal or moral. Neither has Mr. Fergusson the Secretary to the Landholders Association nor Mr. Robinson, a member of the said Association said anything that would lead the Court to believe, that since the publication of the passage against Mr. MacArthur, who is also a member of the same Association, he is fallen in the estimation of his brother members or any other of his acquaintances. Mr. MacArthur is still a member of the Landholders Association although the book containing the libel was circulated among all the members – a fact which goes to prove that no one member of the Landholders and Commercial Association thought Mr. MacArther guilty of the charge of being accessory to the murder from the fact of the passage in the Book being published. And then we have the fact that Mr. Back-with, the owner of the

factory, where the murder is said to have been committed thought not the worse of Mr. MacArthur because the said libel was published against him. The plaintiff might have been said to have sustained severe injury if upon the publication of the libel his employer dismissed him from the post of manager which certainly he would have done if he believed the statement against Mr. MacArthur, that he was accessory to a murder committed in the factory under his charge. The defendant did not ask Mr. MacArthur though he might have done so with every justice "what damage have you sustained from the publication of the libel ?" But the defendant does not ask this question neither does the plaintiff or the other witnesses, called in support of the pleading speak a single word as to the damages sustained by the said libellous publication although it was imperative on Mr. MacArthur to have stated at once the nature and amount of damages incurred by him and no less imperative on the witnesses called on his behalf becuase they were more capable of calculating the damage which plaintiff might have suffered by which he naturally might have overrated. But not a single word has been said of damages incurred by the publication of the libel. It might be said that the fact of a copy of the Book in question being sent to the Secretary of that powerful Society, that for the diffusion of Christian knowledge in India, and also two or three other influential gentlemen in England, has in favour of it, an inference very much against the character of Mr. MacArthur. But His Lordship thought differently. The Secretary to the Society for the spread of Christian Knowledge, and the other gentlemen who are in receipt of the Book have no means of knowing Mr. MacArthur or such a person as Mr. MacArthur as manager of the factory mentioned. So long therefore as the persons in England in receipt of the work are not personally acquainted, nor ever indifferently acquainted with him, so long Mr. MacArthur can not be said to have sustained any damage in the eyes of those personages from the fact of certain defamatory matter being published against him in Part III of the Selections. The Court is of opinion that so far from Mr. MacAuthur having suffered any damage personal or real, from the fact of the publication of the libel he was much rather raised than lowered in the estimation of the Landholders and Commercial Association of which he was a member. A fund has been set apart to pay for this prosecution by the Association, a fact which

certainly goes to prove that Mr. MacArthur has in no way suffered in the eyes of his friends and neighbours. Such being the facts of the case the finding of the Court may be summed up thus :– that defendant had published a dafamatory matter against Mr. MacArthur without any legal ground or cause; that there was all absence of "malice in fact" on the part of defendant; that no damage was proved to have been sustained by the plaintiff.

Before giving final Judgement, his Lordship cited a parallel case in which the jury, not finding either "malice in fact" or any damages, personal or real, sustained by plaintiff, awarded nominal damages of 2 shillings. The case was one in which a newspaper reprinted a certain defamatory article from another paper, with comments of his own rather condemnatory than in favour of it. Neither of the two principal points mentioned by his Lordship *viz.* "Malice in fact" against the plaintiff, or damages sustained by him being proved, the jury very wisely awarded nomial damages.

The Court is of opinion that in the case before it, neither "Malice in fact" on the part of the defendant nor any damage sustained by the plaintiff has been proved. It would therefore award nominal damages of one Rupee with costs. – *Phœnix*.

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CHAPTER V

NIL DURPAN

When the oppression of the indigo planters reached its highwater mark, *Nil Durpan* was published from a printing press at Dacca. The author was the late Rai Denobandhu Mitter Bahadur. He was born in the district of Nuddea, the principal scene of the Indigo disturbance. An indigo factory stood not far from the humble cottage which was the home of his infancy. If there was one thing more than another, which was ever present in the mind of the author of *Nil Durpan*, from the earliest dawn of reason, it was the stern reality of the blue dye. This was reflected in the 'mirror' *(durpan)* he presented to the public. He did not give his name in the book which was described as "written by a certain traveller for the good of ryots, suffering from the bite of the cobra-decapello in the form of the indigo planter." The date of the publication was 2nd Asswin 1782 (Saka Era), corresponding with the middle of September 1860.

The author was then in the service of the Government as Superintendent under the Post Master General, Bengal. As regards the opportunities which he had of experiencing the sufferings of the ryots, the late Rai Bankim Ch. Chatterjee Bahadur C. I. E., the greatest literary genius of Bengal, writes as follows in his short sketeh of the life of Denobandhu Mitra.

> "In consequence of Govt. work, he had to travel again and again from Manipore to Ganjam and from Darjeeling to the seas. It was not merely travelling by road or visiting a town; he had to go from village to village for inspecting post offices. He had extraordinary power of mixing with people and he used to mix gladly with people of all classes. He knew intimately low-caste villager's daugthters like *Khetramony*, old village women like *Aduri*, village ryots like *Torap, Dewans of Indigo Factory, Ameens Tagiteers & c.* He knew how they lived and how they talked and his pen pictured these with fidelity. No other Bengalee writer has had such success. He had travelled much in those districts where indigo was manufactured, and was acquainted in all its details with the oppression of the ryots by the planters of that time. None knew it so well as he knew it."

But Intellect must go hand in hand with Emotion. And Bankim Ch. has not omitted to show how Denobandhu Mitter was eminently fitted by the extraordinary quality of his heart to mirror the sufferings of others. He observes :-

"Mere knowledge counts for nothing. There is no creation without sympathy. Not only was Denobandhu's knowledge of society astonishing, his sympathy was very quick. But the matter of wonder and especial appreciation is this, that his keen sympathy was with every class of people. I have known none other touch the heart of the sorrows of the poor and the afflicted as he did. By virtue of his natural sympathy, the misery of the oppressed ryot appealed to his heart like misery felt by himself, and the poet was constrained to pour out the fountain of his heart through his pen. In *Nil Durpan*, the author's experience and sympathy combined in full measure and it was the most powerful of all his dramas. In other dramas there may be other merits, but in none of them was the power of *Nil Durpan*. Though the chief aim of Nil Durpan was the correction of a social wrong, still it was most excellent as a piece of poetic art. The enchanting sympathy of the author has made all full of sweetness."

Mr. R. C. Dutta, the foremost man of letters in Bengal, speaks of Denobandhu Mittra in his book called "The Literature of Bengal." In Chapter XVII, headed "Dramatic Writers. - Dinobandhu Mittra" he commences his notice of *Nil Durpan* as follows :-

"Dinobandhu, who was born in Chauberia village, in the Nuddea District, had ample oportunities to note the doings of the planters and their subordinates. At last in 1860, he published his first dramatic work, *Nil Durpan* anonymously, bringing together facts and incidents which had come under his observation, and weaving them into the main plot with the skill of a true artist."

The relation of the drama to the stirring period which followed it has been beautifully described by Pandit Siva Nath Sastri, the leader of the popular Brahmo movement, in his Bengalee essay, "National awakening and National literature". He says that national literature gives rise to national awakening, and shows how the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau brought about the French Revolution, the works of William Llyod Garrison and Theodore Parker paved the way for the American

Civil War, and Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," tolled the knell of the slave trade. He also refers to the Indigo-agitation thus :–

> "Why go we to a distance ? Whithin the time of our own recollection, we have seen, that in this province of Bengal a great awakening was brought about by the help of national literature. When the celebrated patriot Harish Chandra Mookerjee took up his pen in the *Hindoo Patriot* the planters' citadel of sin trembled. When people's minds were thus excited then was published Denobondhoo Mitter's celebrated drama, *Nil Durpan*. We shall never forget the great upheaval which it caused in Bengalee society. All of us children, oldmen and women became almost mad. It was the talk in every home and in every lodging was its representation. Bengal began to quake from one end to the other as if from the effects of a seismic shock. As the result of this great upheaval, the oppression of the indigo planters vanished for ever from Bengal."

In the foregoing quotation mention has been made of the representation of *Nil Durpan*. In this respect its place of birth was no mute but echoed to the sound to its west. The Dacca Correspondent of the Harkara of the 12th June 1861 wrote –

> "Our native friends entertain themselves with occasional theartrical performances, and the *Nil Durpan* was acted on one of these occasions."

The excitement was not confined to Bengal only. There was response from Bombay and people there made arrangements for the performance of the drama, as described by the *Hindoo Patriot* of the 5th September, 1861.

> "We learn from the *Times of India* that the Editor of the Bombay *Somachar Darpan* has completed arrangements to bring the *Nil Durpan* on the stage of the GRANT ROAD THEATRE. Is there no Editor of the *Englishman* type there to bring the libel-theatring Editor to his bearing ?"

We take this opportunity to inform our readers that *Nil Durpan* occupies the foremost place in the history of the Public Stage at Calcutta. On the 7th December, 1872 the first public theatre in Calcutta was ushered into existence with the performance of *Nil Durpan*. Though the stage accessories were of the crudest kind, nevertheless the performance created quite a sensation in Calcutta. At a meeting held on the 7th

December, 1900 to commemorate the redlettered day for the native Stage, Babu Amrita Lal Bose, himself a dramatic genius and the popular manager of the Star Theatre in Calcutta, in his address, classified the history of the Stage into four periods and designated the intitial period as the 'Denobandhu era.' He further observed that the quick success which was achieved at the very inception of the Stage was chiefly due to the esteemed popularity in which *Nil Durpan* and the other works of Denobandhu were held, and the great enthusiam and eagerness displayed for their representation. In 1898 he revived the performance of *Nil Durpan* for the younger generation, and spoke of it thus :–

> "The chief cause, which originated this tragedy is, happily for all, past and gone; but its intrinsic merit as a high class drama and the vivid scenes of domestic life in rural Bengal, with which it is replete, have raised *Nil Durpan* to the dignity of classical literature and will make it endure as long as the Bengali language lives."

All the preceding remarks were made long after the indigo strife had ceased. The foremost idea in the minds, of their authors was literary and historical criticism and not any political reflexion. Sir W. W. Hunter, however, seemed not to have lost sight of the political aspect of Nil Durpan. In his celebrated history, "*The Indian Empire*," he alludes to the dramatic revival in India and observes that some have a political significance, and makes mention of Nil Durpan. In this connection it is gratifying to note that even the *Englishman* which denounced the drama in 1861, changed its tone forty years later. This will appear from its article on "Literary Bengal" in its issue of the 4th April, 1901. We take the following :–

> "Of the Bengalee dramatists the only one well known to European readers, is Denobandhu Mitra. But in his case again the popularity was scarcely literary. He wrote *Nil Durpan*, regarding the political effects of which Mr. Buckland gives so interesting a narrative in his book about the Lieutenant Governors of Bengal. *** Yet there are passages in Nil Durpan which Bengali students say are matchless for grace and purity of style."

The remarks and observations quoted before are intended to guard the readers, who have not read *Nil Durpan*, against the most undeserv-

ing epithets in which the drama was described both by the Bench and the Bar at the trial of the Rev. Mr. Long. The author himself was not spared. Most unjust motives were ascribed to him. It was even insinuated that he had an eye to his own preferment in writing the book. Such were the absurd innuendoes contained in the following lines penned by the Dacca Correspondent, of the *Harkaru*, in its issue of the 29th June, 1861 :-

> "At any rate as you are aquainted with the name of this *friend of the poor and needy*, keep an eye upon the appointments and promotions in connection with the Post Office and you may be edified some morning."

The words in italics seem to be a pun upon the name of the author – *Denobandhu, (friend to the poor)* -- and evidently imply that his name was not unknown to the parties libelled, prior to the prosecution of the Rev. James Long.

But how different was the actual state of things as regards the author's prospects in the service will appear from the remarks of Mr. James Routledge, sometime editor of the *Friend of India* and Special Indian Correspondent of the Times (London). He writes in his book – "English Rule and Native Opinion in India" :-

> "The *Nil Durpan* bade fair for the moment to wreck the author's prospects; and is to his honour that he was willing for them to be wrecked, if by giving up his name as author, he could have saved Mr. Long."

Mr. Routledge speaks of the author, as a man of genial temper to whom bitterness was unknown, and who was said to have no enemy. He was made a Rai Bahadur afterwards, but as Mr. Routledge mentions, it was for his good organising power in the Lushai Expedition of 1871.

Babu Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has also remarked to that effect in his Life of Denobandhoo Mitra :-

> "He wrote *Nil Durpan* and laid the Bengal peasantry under a debt never to be repaid. He knew full well that when it would be given out that he was the author of *Nil Durpan* there would be chances of mischief happening to him. Knowing all these Denobandhu did not desist from publishing *Nil Durpan*. It is true that the author's name was not given in

Nil Durpan, but Denobandhu did not take any steps to keep the author's name concealed. After the publication of *Nil Durpan* all the people in Bengal somehow or other came to know that Denobandhu was its author. Denobandhu felt much distressed at the sorrows of others, and *Nil Durpan* was the fruit of this quality. In as much as he fully felt the suffering of the ryots of Bengal in his heart, *Nil Durpan* was written and published."

To relate the circumstances which led to the translation of the drama we can not do better than quote the facts given by Mr. W. S. Seton-Karr in his letter dated the 27th July 1861.

"About the month of October or November last the Rev. Mr. Long brought to my notice the existence of this drama in the original Bengali. I felt quite satisfied that the drama was the genuine production of a native resident in the Moffusil. On dipping into the original. I was struck with the thorough knowledge of village life which it displayed, with the pointedness of the Bengali proverbs some of which were new, while others were familiar to me and with its colloquial style and vernacular idiom.

After this, the drama was translated by a native with my sanction and knowledge, as some persons were desirous of seeing it in an English form and 500 copies were printed and sent to the Bengal Office. Remembering how little is known to the authorities and to Europeans generally, of the undercurrents of native society, how constantly men of the greatest Indian experience, the widest benevolence, and the largest sympathy, had lamented their utter inability to penetrate the recesses of native thought and feeling; how repeatedly Government itself had been blamed, during and before the Mutiny for paying no heed to cheap publications emanating from the native press and indicative of popular feeling. I thought the work was one to which attention ought to be called. And to this opinion I must still adhere, however erroneous the mode of calling attention to the drama may have been."

The Rev. James Long took upon himself the task of having the drama translated in English, to open the eyes of the Government and the English Community. The actual translation was made by the immortal poet of the *Meghnadbadh*, – Michael Madhusudan Dutt. The translation was hurried through in a single night, and this would account for the many defects in the English rendering of the drama. In a translation, much of

the force and beauty of the original is lost and this becomes most conspicuous where one of the beauties of the original consists in the faithful reproduction of rustic thoughts and feelings, clothed in provincial dialect strikingly well suited to them. But the difficulties with which an English translation of *Nil Durpan* is beset can only be realised by those who have read the book in the original. In spite of all, the translation did not fail to present a glimpse of the original to English readers. This was borne out by the testimony of the great historian Marshman himself. In his letter to the *Friend of India* occurs the following passage.

> "We hear with some little surprise of the extraordinary sensation created in Bengal and more especially in Calcutta by the *Nil Durpan*. Inspite of all the disadvantages of a translation it is evidently written with talent. In the original it must have created a powerful interest in the native community."

However Mr. Long's publication was not the only one, for the *Hindoo Patriot*, of the 26th May, 1862, writes :-

> "The London S P E C I A L of the *Harkaru* states that Messrs Simpkin, Marshall and Co. have published the *Nil Durpan* in London. Pity the justice of Sir Morduant Wells cannot reach these enterprising publishers."

The translation was not confined to English alone, Babu Bankim Chandra Writes, that *Nil Durpan* was translated and read in many languages of Europe and points out that this good fortune has not come to any other Bengali book.

Before proceeding further we record here a striking event which occurred while *Nil Durpan* was being written. It is not uncommon to find in history instances where persons blessed with some mission in life, are divinely rescued from sudden death. We lack the vision and faculty divine and thus fail to read the manifestations of an overruling Divinity that shapes our end. These imminent dangers are blessings in disguise and glorified are the mortals whom they visit. Such was the case with the author of *Nil Durpan*. When and how this happened has been beautifully described by Rai Bankim Chandra in the following lines :-

> "One night, Denobandhu was crossing the Megna, while compos-

ing *Nil Durpan*. When the boat was about four miles from the shore it suddenly began to sink. Oarsmen, helmsman and all commenced swimming. Denobondhu was unable to swim. Denobondhu sat silently in the sinking boat, with *Nil Durpan* in his hand. Suddenly then the feet of a swimmer touched the earth. He called out to them all and said :– "No fear, the water here is shallow, there must be a chur close by." Really there was a chur in the vicinity. The boat was brought there and run upon the chur. Denobondhu came out and sat on the roof of the boat, still the wet *Nil Durpan* was in his hand. The Megna was then ebbing out, but soon the high-tide would return and the chur submerge, and the disabled boat would be carried away filled with water. How could life be then saved was the thought of the boat's crew. Denobondhu was also thinking. Night was then deep and the darkness thick. On the four sides was the fearsome sound of the dashing stream. From time to time were heard the cries of the birds of night. Finding no means for the saving of life Dinobandhu was becoming completely hopeless. At this time was heard at a distance the splashing of oars. All cried aloud over and over again, and the passengers of the distant boat answered. They came there quickly, and saved Denobondhu with his companions."

Thus the author of *Nil Durpan* escaped a watery grave in the bosom of the Megna. It is said that when Clive thrice missed the meadly shot aimed at himself, he exclaimed that he was destined for something great. Well might the author of *Nil Durpan* have exclaimed on planting his moist feet on the desolate bank of the Megna that his drama was meant to fulfil some mission. What that mission was we have tried to disclose in these pages.

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CHAPTER VI

TRANSLATION AND TRIAL

In publishing the translation of *Nil Darpan* from the Bengalee, the Rev. James Long wrote an introduction * in which he set forth his views as to the origin of the work and why it was translated. The book was printed at the "Calcutta Printing and Publishing Press" – No. 10 Westons Lane, by one Mr. C. H. Manuel. The title page was worded thus :– "Nil Darpan or the Indigo Planting Mirror, a drama translated from the Bengalee, by a Native." The number of copies struck was 500, and the printer's bill was paid by Mr. Long himself.

When the books were out of the press by the spring of 1861, several copies were distributed under the frank and seal of the Government of Bengal. Mr. W. S. Seton-Karr, former President of the Indigo Commission, and then Secretary to the Government of Bengal, was responsible for the distribution. It will be seen from the distribution list+ which was produced at the trial that some of them were distributed under instructions from Mr. Long and others by the Bengal Office itself. In the letter mentioned before Mr. Seton-Karr had his remarks on the publication and distribution, and we give them below :–

"The list given in at the trial contains the number of copies issued, or 202, being not one half of those printed, and the circulation took place with my knowledge, but owing to a misconception on my part, not with that of the Lieutenant Governor.

The said list is one of a class of papers not usually brought on record, and it might with case have been torn up, without blame being inputed to any one, and without its existence being known out of the office. I have taken care that it should be preserved, not from any spirit of defiance, but because however erroneous my judgement may have been, I felt that it would ill become me to attempt to suppress or conceal anything which shewed the real extent of what had been done.

A great deal of censure has been passed upon the secrecy with which this book was criculated. I contend that the very fact of circulation under official frank shews that no secrecy was attempted or intended beyond the unavoidable secrecy of the Post Office. Had it been intended, as has been stated, to stab reputations in the dark it would have been compara-

*See PP 6 & 7 of the Trial. + See PP 25 & 26 of the Trial.

tively easy to have circulated a number of copies by the ordinary Book postage which mode could have afforded no clue whatever as to the sender.

After all, whole indian circulation amounts to 14 copies and most of those have been recalled or destroyed. No copies were sent to any newspaper or public body in Calcutta, because it was considered that to make selections would be invidious, and that, on the whole those who had taken one side or the other in the Indigo crisis were hardly in the position to form a fair estimate of any such popular representation of native feeling. Any large local circulation would probably have done no good. As a bare fact, the impress of the Government frank must, I contended, disprove the charge of a wish to culminate in secret, and of any underhand proceeding. Indeed it will hardly be contended with seriousness that any one wishing to produce irritation or to hurt the feelings of others without detection and in safety from any possible consequences, would choose such a mode of circulation as the sending to four papers in four different parts of India; and the conductors of the English press remote from the scene of controversy, might take some little interest in a genuine expression, however exaggerated, of native feeling by native authors.

The copies sent home were addressed to gentleman holding different political opinions and these gentlemen had, several of them, been furnished with copies of published documents, relating to the Indigo question. But while I contend that my conduct has been straightforward and honest, I have no hesitation in expressing my most sincere regret that any such publication should at all have taken place. It has excited great irritation; it has given rise to much misconstruction both as to the Government of Bengal and to individuals; it has seriously offended a very respectable and influential body of men for whose difficulties I have every sympathy and whom, officially and nonofficially, I have always desired to assist, even when I differed from their views and opinions; and it has resulted in the successful prosecution of a very excellent Missionary of the Church of England. At the sametime, while fully acknowledging the error committed in this instance, my earnest conviction is, that, putting aside the heat which the Indigo question has excited and looking to ordinary times, it is not the transmission of such publication to Editors and to official and unofficial Englishmen that is likely to do mischief, but their circulation among the Native public unnoticed by Government and unknown to the European community. Under this conviction I acted without (as I must on reflection admit) sufficiently con-

sidering all the peculiar circumstances which rendered the publication of this work unwise."

The publication greatly annoyed the planters, most of the English Editors and their friends. The drama was to them what red rag is to the bull, and they lost no time in trying to elicit information as to who was the translator and under what circumstances it was published under the frank of the Bengal office. The steps they took with the above view will appear from the following correspondence –

The Landholders and Commercial Association.

To E. H. LUSHINGTON ESQ.,

Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

SIR,

I am directed by the General Committee of the Association to beg that you will inform them if it was with the Sanction and authority of the Government of Bengal, that a publication entitled *"Nil Durpan"* has been circulated through means of the Post Office under the offical frank and Seal of the Bengal Secretariat.

I myself have seen an envelope containing that publication so franked and circulated, and therefore, there can be no doubt of the fact.

If it has been done without the sanction or knowledge of the Government of Bengal the Committee will expect a formal and official disavowal of the proceeding, and that the names of the parties who have thus made use of the name and means of Government to circulate a foul and malicious libel on indigo Planters, tending to excite sedition and breaches of the peace, be given to us in order that they may be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law.

I have the honor to be

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

Calcutta, the 25 May 1896.

(Signed) W. F. FERGUSSON,
Secy. Landholders and Commercial Association of British India.

Landholders and Commercial Association of British India.

Calcutta, 26 may 1861.

E. H. LUSHINGTON ESQR.,

Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

SIR,

I annex copy of a letter, which is addressed to you on the 25th instant to which I have not received any reply.

I am directed by the General Committee of the Association to say, that unless they receive a reply in the course of tomorrow the 30 instant they will appeal to the Supreme Government in order that they may be in a position to communicate with the authorities in England by the mail which leaves on the 3rd proximo.

I have the honor to be

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,
(Signed), W. F. FERGUSSON,
Secretary,

The Official circulation of the Nil Durpan.

No. 1426 A,

FROM THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL.

TO W. F. FERGUSSON, ESQ.

Secretary Landholder's and
Commercial Association of British India.
Dated Fort Willam 3rd June 1821,

SIR,

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 25th * and 29th ultimo, the first of which did not reach the Lieutenant Governor until after his return to Paresnath, the 30th.

* *The letter of the 25th not received by the undersigned, till after the receipt of the duplicate forwarded with the association letter of 29th. 'Sd. E. H. Lushington, Secy'.*

The Lieutenant Governor finds that copies of an English translation of the publication named in your letter were sent to certain individuals through the Post Office, under the official seal and frank of the Bengal Secretariat, as mentioned by you. This occurred during his absence from Calcutta and was not by his order. The publication in question however he finds is no libel, and does not, so far as he is aware, infringe the law. It is an English translation of a work of fiction an original Bengalee drama of a popular order, in which, obviously, all the *dramatis personæ* are imaginary, and the story is manifestly a fable. It has no interest but as an indication of strong popular feeling. As such, however, it has significance. It does not appear to the Lieutenant Governor that even the original Bengalee drama, judging from the translation, is likely as the Association supposes, to be of a tendency to excite any class of persons to sedition or breaches of the peace. In this respect however, it is obvious that it is vernacular plays, not English translation that may be dangerous. Nor can the knowledge of respectable official or other European gentlemen, of the existence of such indication of popular feeling as this, be anything but a security against actual sedition and breaches of the peace.

The Lieutenant Governor has read the translation since the copies of which the transmission is complained of, were despatched. It will be found that indigo planters, on whose behalf complaint is made are by no means the only class – Native or European, criticised in this Bengalee play. Faults are as unsparingly imputed to European Magistrates, Natives Officials, and Native factory Omlah, as to indigo planters.

Nevertheless the Lieutenant Governor very much regrets that by the transmission of the translation in question under the official frank of

the Secretariat a misunderstanding has been caused and offence has been given to the respected class of gentlemen on whose behalf you complain. The circumstances would not have occurred but for some inadvertence or mistake. The position of indigo planters in some Bengal districts at present is one with which the Government sincerely sympathises. And nothing is more earnestly desired than the speedy introduction of a sound system for the future, such as shall carry Native feeling along with it.

I have the honor to be

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,
(Signed) E. H. Lushington.
Secy Govt. of Bengal.

The planters however were not satisfied with the letter of the Government which was deprecated by one of their exponents in the following insolent language. "The answer written evidently by the pen of no less a man than Mr. John Peter Grant himself. There is no other man in India who could pen such a false and fair, such an utterly Jesuitical production". The Landholders and Commercial Association were bent upon carrying their threat into execution, and it was settled that prosecution was to be instituted for punishment of the real offenders. As the name of the translator was then not known, prosecution was instituted at the first instance against the printer and publisher, Mr. C. H. Manuel. Application was made against him in the Supreme Court, on the 6th June 1861, and a warrant was granted by Sir Charles Jackson for his arrest. He was arrested and placed in the custody of the Sheriff. The next day the 7th June 1861, the defendent tendered bail through his Counsel Mr. Eglington and put in the plea of 'Not Guilty'. Application was made by the Counsel for prosecution for the empanelment of a special Jury, which was granted and the case was fixed for the 11th June. On the day of hearing, before the Protho-Notary proceeded to call the names of the special Jury, the Counsel for defence withdrew the plea of 'not guilty',

and admitted the charge. He also gave out the name of the Rev. James Long at the request of the latter. Sir Charles Jackson who presided over the Sessions made the following remarks in passing sentance :– "Printers ought to know that they are reponsible for what they print and publish. However no real punishment is sought for in this case. And as the defendent has given up the name of the person and done all in his power to put himself right, the sentence of the Court is that he pay a fine of ten rupees". Thus ended the trial of the printer and publisher of *Nil Durpan* which was a mere prologue to the drama which was subsequently enacted for days together, on the stage of the Supreme Court, and in which Sir Mordaunt Wells played the role of the principal actor.

The announcement of the name of Mr. Long as the author of the publication was received by the planters and their representatives in the Press with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow. It was a matter of rejoicing with them that after all, they had an opportunity, as the *Hindoo Patriot* remarked, 'of wreaking vengence upon a member of a class which had been chiefly instrumental in opening the ryot's eyes to the monstrous deception by which, though in all respects a free man, he had been chained to the soil as a 'serf'. But they were sorry for the defeat of their aim at a much higher game which was foreshadowed by the *Bengal Harakaru* in its issue of the 28th May 1861, in the following words :–

> "We understand that Mr. Seton-Karr avows that it was by his order, the pamphlet was circulated, and we trust that no technicalities will prevent his being prosecuted in the Supreme Court and that no false tenderness or Court favour may keep him from being dismissed that service which he has so foully disgraced."

Such were their feelings against the Ex-President of the Indigo Commission. But as they failed to 'catch him by the hip', they were obliged 'to feed fat the ancient grudge' they bore against the clergy. The Landholders and Commercial Association were then grinding their weapons against the Rev. James Long. He however broke through silence and published a sort of explanation and regret in the *Friend of India* on June 27th, 1861.

His letter is still of great interest as a discussion of the Government

policy towards the Vernacular Press. In it was repeated the suggestion of the appointment of a Curator of the Native Press, which might have led to the creation of the post of the 'Bengal Librarian'. For the information of our readers we have given the letter in full at the end of the chapter. Mr. Skrine, in his Life of Sir W. W. Hunter, speaks of the services of Mr. Long as follows :– "He was an early worker in a field which Hunter made his own. His "Selections from the records of the Bengal Government" published in 1855 and subsequent years cast a flood of light on Anglo Indian life a century back. There is material for half a dozen novels in these forgotten volumes." Sir William Hunter himself was so much struck with the personality of Mr. Long that he wrote of him as follows in a letter to Mrs. Hunter. "Mr. Long is most unlike a *padre* – fine bold features, large head, bushy whiskers and flowing beard, stout, immensely energetic and rather below the middle height." Apart from his holy mission he ever worked for the improvement of the Vernacular Press and always befriended the cause of suffering humanity. Blessed be they who toil for the poor and the helpless!"

The people of Bengal were deeply grateful to Mr. Long for his noble services which might well be said to have been dedicated to the cuase of humanity at large. The distinguished citizens of Calcutta lost no time in displaying their appreciation of him 'fallen on evil tongues'. The following letter was addressed to him on the 12th July 1861 and the signatories were – Raja Radha Kantho Bahadoor, Raja Kali Krisna Bahadoor, Raja Narendra Krisna Bahadoor, Babu Romanath Tagore and fortythree Native gentlemen of Calcutta.

"We are persuaded, Sir, that the part you have taken in carrying through the press the translation of the *Nil Durpan* has been in perfect accordance with your cherished convictions as to the importance of enlightening the European mind here on the contents of the Vernacular Press, and we have therefore observed with pain and sorrow the bitter personal controversy in the newspaper to which your laudable efforts in this description have given rise.

That the *Nil Durpan* is a genuine expression of native feeling on the subject of Indigo planting we can with confidence certify. We are aware that there are passages in the original, put in the mouth of females and others, which may grate on the ears of men of cultivated taste, but

such passages only express the thoughts and ideas current in the order of society painted in the work. If, however, an occasional indelicacy of expression should be a reason for the suppression of a work of fiction, we fear the most ancient and best classics of our land, which are so justly valued all the world over would remain sealed from public view; and judged by the same standard there are not a few of the master-pieces of European genius both ancient and modern, which would not suffer from the ordeal. We however apprehend that the open censure with which your effort has been visited is simply the result of an interested and factious opposition.

We have deemed it due to put you in possession of this expression of our opinion on this important question, in the belief that it may be the means of correcting the wrong impression which we have been sorry to find entertained, *viz* that the Native community do not consider the *Nil Durpan* as an embodiment of popular feeling, and that they do not appreciate the motives which actuated you to bring its contents to the knowledge of the European public. Nothing could be more mistaken than this, and we do sincerely trust and hope that this letter will remove the misapprehension so much to be lamented."

Rev. James Long gave his reply on the 15th July 1861. It was worthy of the man and the occasion. We quote below the concluding paragraph.

"My humble labours as a missionary in this country have taught me to commiserate the sufferings of the masses of the people of this land, and while I have learnt to respect the energy and genius of many of my own countrymen, I have at the same time earnestly wished to urge them to show mercy to the poor, and thus to recommend those principles in the gospel, of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, which Christian mission have always designed to promulgate. If I suffer in this cause, it will only be in common with multitudes of far worthier men who have suffered the loss of all things in the cause of truth, rightousness and humanity."

Such was the man whom the planters wanted to make a victim of Law. The members of the Association held a meeting and it was unanimously resolved that prosecution be instituted against Mr. Long. However they were perplexed as to who should be the complainant, when Mr. Walter Brett, the then Editor of the Englishman come to their res-

cue. At this instance the case was instituted, though the sinews of war were supplied by the Association itself.

On Monday afternoon, the 15th July, 1861 the Grand Jury found a true Bill on the following counts against the Rev James Long, *viz* - for libelling the Editor of the *Englishman* and libelling the Indigo Planters of Lower Bengal in *Nil Durpan*. The trial came on Friday the 19th July, 1861, and lasted for four days.

During the trial, the Court was filled to suffocation both by Europeans and Indians. Not an inch of space was left unoccupied. There were Europeans of every class and denomination. Civilians of every grade from Secretaries of Government and Commissioners, to young Assistants in the Service were present to show their interest in the trial. Missionary gentlemen were there to evince their mark of sympathy with a fellow-brother in his hour of affliction. Merchants, bankers and traders were gathered in such a number that it was remarked that 'there could be no-body left to carry on the business of Calcutta'. These were supplemented by native gentlemen, rich and poor, high and low. Some of the millionaires had their purses full to show to the world that if money could have saved the Reverend gentleman it would not have been wanting. It will be seen later on how the dignity of wealth was maintained on this occasion. Amid this over-whelming crowd of spectators was one figure displaying the most eager and expectant look, and we cannot pass him over. He was no other person than the author of the original *Nil Durpan*. Mr. James Routledge says in his *English Rule and Native Opinion in India*, 'that he was present in Court and ready to exchange places with Mr. Long if that had been possible.' The various feelings that agitated him may be compared to those of Bassanio when the revengeful Jew insisted upon having his pound of flesh. In these days of psychic researches, it will not be out of place, to note, that during the period of his dire suspense and anxiety, he was told in a dream that no trouble would visit him.

We give a report of the Proceedings at the end. It will be found that on the last day of the trial, the 24th July, 1861, Sir Mordaunt Wells passed the sentence of the Court which was a fine of Rs. 1000 and imprisonment in the Common Jail for one month. It is reported that imme-

diately on hearing the verdict Mr. Jong was heard to say – "What I have done now, I will do again". The fine was paid then and there by the liberal-hearted and generous-minded Kally Prasanna Singh of Jorasanko who, it may be added here was equally well known as a man of letters, and the standard version in Bengalee of the grand Sanskrit Epic, the Mahabharat is the living monument of his glory.

The planters however sustained a defeat in their victory. Though the tribunal of the highest Court in the land found Mr. Long guilty, the still higher tribunal of the people gave their verdict in his favour. The *Indian Reformer* of the time writes :– "The apartments of the Rev. Long in the Common Jail were darkened by the shadows, of members of the Civil Service as well as of the Uncovenanted Service of Chaplains and Missionaries, of Gentlemen of the Press and native gentlemen of all degree of respectability. Never was there a person convicted guilty in the highest court of India for whom so much sympathy was excited as for Mr. Long." Those of the readers who have vivid recollection of the incarceration of the Hon'ble Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, the great tribune of the people, will fully realise the spectacle caused at the trial and conviction of the Rev. James Long. Popular singers of the day filled the air with his praises. Some of these songs grew immensely popular and were sung all over Bengal – in towns and villages, in houses and gardens, in huts and fields. The name of the Reverend Gentleman became a household word in Bengal and will ever remain so as long as the Bengali literature will last.

We do not attempt any discussion of the various legal points raised at the trial, but there are certain allegations as to facts made by the Judges which can not stand the test of criticism. It will be seen later that Sir Mordaunt Wells was notorious for his antipathy towards the people of Bengal, and it is no wonder that such allegations should be made by him from his seat of privilege. But it is a puzzle to observe that even that oracle of law, Sir Barnes Peacock should fall into such lamentable errors. This, however, vanishes when we read in the *Hindoo Patriot* of the time that 'Sir Barnes Peacock was nothing if not political and abominated the cant of equality between Europeans and natives.' The best criticism to those allegations were made by the Hon'ble Mr. W. S. Seton-

Karr in his statement mentioned before. We quote the paragraphs bearing on this point.

"The second point is the alleged imputation on the virtue of English women in portions of the drama itself. I can conscientiously say that, untill the point was wrongly insisted on I did not think there were any passages capable of any such construction, and a close inspection of a work consisting of 102 pages has not discovered to me more than two or at most three passages in which English ladies are mentioned at all.

The first passage occurs in a conversation between two poor Bengali women in a village. One woman says, "that the lady has no shame at all, and that when the Magistrate of the Zillah rides about through the villages the lady also rides on horseback with him." The speaker then goes on to say "the bou (or married woman) riding about on a horse !" The other woman has just before said, that "the wife of the planter, in order to make her husband's case strong has sent a letter to the Magistrate, since it is said that the Magistrate hears her words most attentively." To say that those words impute want of virtues to a lady because she writes a letter about a case in Court to a Judicial Officer, or that to go on to argue that it ascribes unchastity to a whole class of English women does not seem to me to be fair or resonable. No doubt it may be injudicious for ladies to write private letters to Magistrates and other Judicial Officers in order to get situations for servants, or for applicants whom they wish to befriend, and the fact of such an officer receiving and answering in Court a letter from a lady, the wife of an actual or possible litigant, on whatever subject it may be, may convey impressions to the very suspicious mind of an ignorant native; but it never entered into my thoughts to conceive that an allusion to this practice would warrant a general charge of even indelicacy, in thought or deed, against women. As regards the statement that a lady riding about the village "must have no shame," I do most emphatically contend that this expression in the mouth of either a Hindoo or Musulman woman expresses nothing but the regular innante ideas generated by Oriental seclusion. The very words which, in Hindustani, would be *iska kuch sharam nehi hai*, and in Bengali *tahar kichchu lajja nahi*, are familiar expressions in the mouths of every Native, speaking of any act which he thinks offensive or in bad taste, done by any one who does not please him. A Native woman brought up in seclusion, with the ideas she has received from childhood generally speaking can no more understand or appreciate propriety in the unrestrained, liberal, enlightened and virtuous intercourse of men and women in our

society, than we can understand or appreciate the social policy which marries girls in their childhood and consigns them through married life, or through premature widowhood to the jealous seclusion of four dull walls. Any Hindu woman, if she holds to the tenets of her father, is exposed to shame, if she sees the face even of her husbands' brother, and must then veil her own face, and it would be asking too much that she should be expected to understand that English men and women should sit, walk, ride and mingle together in social intercourse, without shame or embarrassment.

The other passage is put into the mouth of a jemadar, once a bearer, who says that he has obtained his situation by the influence of a planter's wife, "who wrote one letter to the Magistrate" and who never danced with any other person but the Magistrate. I have already explained this appears to me to be merely an allusion to the very common practice of sending letters of recommendation in favour of old servants to official personages who have places at their disposal. I believe honestly that the practice has long existed and will continue to exist. But where I have heard, as I have heard of any body sending letters of this kind, it has never occurred to me to see any evil design therein; and as to the asserted partiality of an English woman for one perticular partner in a dance, it surely would be a farfetched and uncharitable construction which would attach thereto any hidden or disgraceful meaning.

These are the only two passages which I think it necessary to notice, as they have been much talked of and misunderstood; and as they relate to points in which society, if not possessed of accurate information or if not furnished with the acual words used in the drama, is likely to be sensitive. In a third passage a Magistrate is simply described as writing a letter to a lady in the presence of her husband. But I believe that most persons who know India and and its people will read all this as I have done. I still think my reading is the correct one. Should I be mistaken, or even though I be right, should others think differently, my sorrow for this unfortunate publication will be increased by the thought that an offensive meaning (which I should be among the first to reprehend if, applied by others to any of my country women) had been attached to expressions which I believed and still in my conscience believe to be free from all such gross imputation."

We have nothing to add to this reply, but wonder at the farsightedness of its author. What Mr. Seton-Karr said forty years ago, during the glowing heat of excitement, his countrymen, now find to be true. For,

the *Englishman*, in the articles previously referred to, concludes its remarks on *Nil Durpan* in the following words – "but on the whole the European and Official community in India have lost the sensitiveness of forty years ago, and so far from objecting to fierce attacks on their manners and morals apparently enjoy them."

We cannot however pass unnoticed the conduct of the presiding Judge, Sir Mordaunt Wells. In his enthusiasm to defend his countrymen he so far forgot himself that he combined in him the additional functions of a legislator and an advocate. He imported into his address from the Bench things which were not in evidence. He referred to the letter from Raja Radha Kanta Deb, mentioned before and expressed his surprise that Mr. Long did not tear it into pieces. This passage however, with many others of a grosser nature will not be found in the printed Proceedings of the trial, which as the *Hindoo Patriot* pointed out, 'Sir Mordaunt himself corrected on the proofs'. His address to the Jury far surpassed in party-spirit the address of an Advocate. This led the *Hindoo Patriot* to remark that the credit for the blundering verdict did not belong to the Jury, in as much as the conduct of the Judge and the extraordinary summing up, virtually dictated a verdict to men who were never guilty of opinions of their own. His attempt to sweep away the good old distinction between Judges and Legislatures, led to disastrous results to the various parties concerned and the *Hindoo Patriot* was obliged to observe as follows :–

> "It has been thus with all arbitary Judges. It was thus with Jeffries on the English Bench. It was thus with Impey on the Indian. The law refused to square with their desires and they unceremoniously set it aside and made laws of their own. So also when the Judges of our Supreme Court, whose patriotism and chivalry combined, led them to sympathise with the broken fortunes of their blue countrymen, and to volunteer to lead and by whatever means lay in their power prop up their cause, decided upon making an example of Mr. Long as a warning to all who spoke ill of Indigo or of themselves and found that the law offered them little assistance, with the shamelessness and recklessness of pettifogging lawyers they brought out from their portfolio a new law ready cut and dried for the occasion and brandishing it in face of an astonished Court, virtually commanded the Jury to abide by it."

The *Nil Durpan* trial however was not an isolated instance which showed the conduct of Sir Mordaunt Wells from the Bench, in its worst aspect. Indeed it was a habit with him to play the part of a moralist and politician from the Bench. He always indulged in intemperate and unbecoming generalisations, and ever delighted in vilifying a whole nation from the particular cases of crime he was required to punish. His remarks so much exasperated the Bengalees that they were obliged to shake off their forbearance which may be said to be the badge of thier nation. A meeting was held at the *Nat Mandir* of Sir Raja Radha Kanta Bhahadoor on 26th Aug. 1861, for the recall of Sir Mordaunt Wells, in which the following resolution was adopted :–

> "That this Meeting desires to record not without a feeling of regret that its confidence in the Hon'ble Sir M. Wells, Kt, as a Judge of the Highest Court of Judicature in Bengal, has been impaired in consequence of his frequent and indiscriminate attacks on the characters of the natives of this country with an intemperance inconsistent with the calm dignity of the Bench, as well as from his repeated and indiscreet exhibition of strong political bias and race prejudices which are not compatible with the impartial administration of Justice".

The meeting was attended by over five thousand people. Raja Radha Kanta Bhahadoor explained the object of the meeting thus :–

> "Our task is certainly unpleasant, but it is a duty and we feel bound to discharge it, by shrinking from it we should shew our want of self respect, humiliate ourselves as a nation and ignore the real interest of the country."

Raja Protap Chandra Singh, Raja Kali Krishna, Babus Ram Gopal Ghosh, Kalee Prasanna Singha, Roma Nath Tagore, Debendra Nath Tagore, Jotindra Mohon Tagore and others also addressed the meeting. A memorial was sent to the Secretary of State for India with a view to represent to Her Majesty's Government the circumstances affirmed in the Resolution. The memorial contained mostly passages of Sir M. Wells's charges to the Jury anent forgery and perjury. A good portion of it was also devoted to the trial of the Rev. Mr. Long, and the memorialists appeared to have laid great stress on the remarks of the Judge regarding their Address to Mr. Long. Sir Charles Wood replied to the memorial in his despatch to the Governor General dated the 24th Decem-

ber 1861. He therein expressed his hope that those who held judicial office might be sensible of how great importance it was that their denunciations of crime might not be interpreted into hasty imputations against a whole people or community. We have only to add in this connection that the *Hindoo Patriot* justly remarked that the expression of hope, on the part of the Indian Minister was tantamount to command, and trusted that it would have the effect of keeping Sir Mordaunt Wells straight in his path of duty.

During the imprisonment of Mr. Long, the leaders of the native community, asked him if he would consent to a petition being sent to Government by them for a remission of his imprisonment, but he dissuaded them from taking such a step as it would greatly embarrass the Government. However they presented him an Address in prison which was signed by 30,000 persons. It was also contemplated under the leadership of Raja Protap Chandra Singh Bahadoor to have a demonstration to welcome Mr. Long on the day of his liberation. This however was subsequently abandoned owing to political considerations. Mr. Long also forbade any such demonstration. Still when he came out of the Jail on the evening of Saturday the 24th Aug. 1861, there were present from two to three hundred people to salute him at the moment of his liberation.

No sooner did he become freeman again than he published a pamphlet in which he shewed that it was not without cause that he interfered in the controversy. He asked his assailants and prosecutors in the memorable words of the great Athenian General, – "Strike, but Hear". The 'factory journals' spoke ill of the pamphlet and the *Hurkaru* tried to ridicule it in the following lines :–

> "The godfather of the *Nil Durpan* invites the planters and the world generally to apply 'Shamchand' to his reverend person but to do him the favour to hear him."

But little did the planters know then that the incarceration of the Reverend gentleman produced a *Shamchand* which prevented their raising their heads any more in Lower Bengal.

The members of the Calcutta Missionary Conference at a meeting held on July 30th 1861, passed a resolution in favour of the Rev. James

Long. Even the Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Cotton, could not remain silent. He wrote an article in the 'Christian Intelligencer' upon the *Nil Durpan* affair for the British public. He wrote thus :–

> "His (Sir M. Wells's) charge is generally said to have been characterised by extraordinary virulence and that it is a melancholy instance of the opposition which may be sometimes observed in this world between legal and moral justice. Passages, which the Judge described as being foul and disgusting, are in no way more gross than many an English story or play turning on the ruin of a simple, hunted rustic which people read and talk about without scruple. Beacuse Mr. Dickens has libelled Yorkshire School-masters, Chancers, Barristers, Clerks in Government Offices, and Masters of work houses, and was not prosecuted for libel, therefore the publication of the *Nil Durpan* ought not to have been the subject of an indictment.."

Christian commendations gave the lie to the hope entertained by Mr. Long's enemies that his brethren of the cloth would forsake him. They were equally disappointed in finding that the majority of the Press spoke in favour of the persecuted missionary. The following remarks taken from the *Phœnix* represented the actual situation :–

> "While, as regards the strength of parties represented through the editorial fraternity that have declared for or against the treatment of Mr. Long by his prosecutors, the following is sufficient to show on which side is the majority of the Presidency Press.

Friend of India, Phœnix, Indian Empire, Hindoo Patriot, Indian Reformer, Entire Native Press,	*Englishman Harkara.*

> Thus if newspaper literature be any reliable exponent of public opinion it has already declared itself against Mr. Long's prosecutors by a tremendous majority on the very spot that has witnessed his courageous stand against the bitter hostility of an infuriated multitude."

The *Hindoo Patriot* justly said that when the verdict of India was found conclusive, the opponents looked forward with deluded hopes to England. 'They laid deep their machinations by circulating interpolated accounts of the proceedings to poison the ears of the British public.' But inspite of all their efforts, the waves of sympathy produced in India reached the English shores, and there was the ultimate triumph of the cause of righteousness and truth.

We begin with the fellow-feeling displayed by the Church Missionary Society of England. The Committee of the Society recorded their resolution on the 24th September 1861, from which we cull the following :–

"The fact that one of their Missionaries has been criminally prosecuted for libel is one respecting which some public notice on the part of the Committee, is due both to Mr. Long and the Missionary body in general, and to their constituents in this country. It is a matter of devout thankfulness that the Committee can approach the subject, not indeed without pain, but without shame. Their missionary has in no way dishonoured his sacred profession, and the all but uniform verdict of public opinion in his favour renders the discharge of their duty in the present case an easy one.

* * * * *

The Committee, therefore, at the same time that they add to these assurances an expression of their own heartfelt and prayerful sympathy with Mr. Long in this hour of trial, would further declare that they repose the same cofidence as heretofore in his missionary character and principles. They trust that his effort on behalf of the masses in Bengal conducted with the increase of wisdom which experience cannot fail to afford, will be unabated; and they pray that blessings personal and blessings missionary may be multiplied upon him from on High."

The *London Review* condemned the conduct of the presiding judge thus –

"Unless a very different colour be given to the case it is plain that justice will not be satisfied by a reversal of the decision, without the dismissal of the Judge whose charge to the Jury and whose sentence on the defendant shows a spirit of partizanship which is never witnessed on the Bench in England and cannot be tolerated in her dependencies."

The *Daily News* (London) made the observations quoted below :–

"It was in truth as if the French Clergy had prosecuted Moliere, or the Yorkshire Schoolmasters, the author of Nicholas Nickleby, or the Sourthern Planters the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin. And this extreme view of the character of the work was adopted by the presiding Judge Sir M. Wells. This Prosecution is a piece of childish revenge. The Indigo planters have failed in their attempts to mislead the Home public or shake the firmness of the Home Government, so they seek and find in the pas-

sions of non-official community of Calcutta the means of striking one of a body of men who have been mainly instrumental in enlightening the British nation respecting their relation with the ryot. It is much to be regretted that they are successful.

If all Calcutta were empannelled as a Jury, the verdict would not persuade the English public that a gentleman bent on slandering and vilifying a wealthy and powerful class of his countrymen would send a foul and filthy libel to the Rev. Baptist Noel and the Earl of Shaftesbury, or palm a caricature of the Indian rural life as veridical on Sir Charles Trevelyan, Lord Stanley and the Earl of Ellenbrough. The mere enumeration of the persons selected as recipients of the translated drama, shew that copies were sent in good faith to acquaint those who in the country pay most attention to Indian subjects, with a particular tendency and working of the Native mind. We believe that they will discover before Parliament meets that in instituting the trial they have made serious mistake."

Another paper called the *"Press"* had the following remarks :–

"We rejoice that justice is administered in West Minster Hall on different principles than those of Sir Mordaunt Well. It is with much regret that we criticize the sentence of a Judge. In England the dignity and integrity of the Bench have been so well maintained for centuries that we are apt to look upon Colonial Judges with the respect which we entertain for their brethren at home. But the conduct of Sir Mordaunt Wells reminds us that he is one of the successors of Sir Elijah Impey whose name has come down to posterity with infamous celebrity owning to the eloquence of Burke."

An Address was also sent to the Rev. James Long by the "Aborigenes Protectin Society" which contains the following passages :–

"The sympathies of Christian England are with you. The natives of India vied with each other in their expressions of regard. We find there (Report of the Indigo Commission) facts starting enough to awaken our indignation, without there being the least temptation for us to draw upon the imagination of a play-wright."

The preceding quotations give a glimpse of the public sympathy displayed towards Mr. Long. But it must be noticed, at the same time, that opinions were not wanting to uphold the cause of the planters. It seems, however, from the accompanying remarks of the *Friend of India*,

that the balance inclined in favour of the innocent missionary.

> "The extreme section of Calcutta agitators. who have unfortunately been allowed to represent the wishes and the policy of the non-official class, shew by the silence with which they received the rebukes of the English Press, how keenly they now feel the blunder they committed in invoking the aid of a barbarious law of libel, and a thoughtless Judge to punish the translator of the *Nil Durpan*."

The *Hindoo Patriot* also made a review of the opinions of the English Press on the trial and observed as follows :–

> "But not one journal defended the Planters or justified the judge. Even the *Times* once remained ominously silent. On the other hand a universal shout of indignation was raised against the Judge from one extreme of the United Kingdom to the other for his partizan charge and discreditable sentence. Many went to the length of declaring that the demands of justice would not be satisfied until the Judge was dismissed who was complimented as the Indian type of English Jeffreys. Their sympathy of Mr. Long was however as loud and deep as their condemnation of the Indigo planters and their model Judge."

The trial was noticed not only by the leading journals but was also the subject of discussion in the House of Commons. We learn from the *Harkara* of 1861 'that to *Nil Durpan* belonged the merit of raising in England a more intense curiosity about India than anything that had happened since the impeachment of Warren Hastings.' The *Hindoo Patriot* pointed out that in reply to a question from Sir John Shelley in the House, Sir Charles Wood treated the attempt to make the *Nil Durpan* a Government libel on the Indigo Planters, with the scorn which it fully deserved. Later, the Secretary of State for India expressed his opinion on all the features of the case, which the *Hindoo Patriot* observed, was as pointed and as satisfactory as every friend of India could have wished. We cannot pass over the mention of the name of that great statesman who presided over the destinies of the teeming millions of India, without feelings of the deepest gratitude to his memory. If his great Educational Despatch opened the portals of knowledge to the tillers of the mind, his ultimate decrees during the whole of the burning period of the Indigo Disturbance showered blessings of peace on the tillers of the soil.

We have dealt at length with the trial of the Rev. James Long, now we have to say a few words as to the official trial of Mr. Seton-Karr for having distributed the translation under the official seal and frank of the Bengal Government. The antipathy of the planter against the President of the Indigo Commission was more deep-rooted than against Mr. Long and they would not let slip any opportunity for bringing him into discredit. He was then Legislative Member for Bengal in the Governor General's Council. An official enquiry was instituted and in the first instalment of the report, submitted to the Governor-General, Sir John Peter Grant admitted the unfortunate mistake committed by his Secretary and pointed out how it distressed him beyond measure. Mr. Seton-Karr, who was probably silent in view of the proceedings of the Court, sent in resignation of his appointment, as soon as the trial was over. In his letter of the 27th July 1861, already referred to, he took the earliest opportunity of putting on record the chief points of his connection with the *Nil Durpan* publication, as an explanation to the public. He also made an official statement to the Lieutenant Governor which was sent upto the Government of India, by Sir John Peter Grant with his own Minute. He observes. –

> "In putting his resignation of his office of Member of the Legislative Council at the disposal of Government., he has acted the part of an honourable and high-minded man consistently with his own established character. I do not think that the public interest would be served by acting upon the power thus placed in my hands; but my judgement does not affect the case so far as Mr. Seton-Karr's disinterested conduct is concerned."

The Governor-General in his Resolution dated the 8th August 1861, strongly disapproved of the whole matter and ended with the following direction :– "It is decidedly the opinion of the Governor-General-in-Council that, when Mr. Seton-Karr shall no longer have to discharge the duties of his present position in the Legislative Council, he should not be allowed to return to the office of the Secretary to the Government of Bengal."

The Secretary of State, agreed in this view, but expressed at the same time that "so able and distinguished a public servant as Mr. Seton-Karr had shown himself to be, would on his ceasing to sit in the Legisla-

tive Council, be placed in some suitable sitaution where the public might have the benefit of his high service." Mr. Seton-Karr was afterwards appointed a Judge of the High Court and ended his career as Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department.

Besides, the Rev. James Long, the Hon'ble Mr. Seton-Karr, another gentleman also suffered in connection with the translation. It has been said before, that the drama was actually translated by Michael Madhusudan Dutt. He was then a Barrister-at-Law and held some office in the Supreme Court. Babu Bankim Chandra writes that he was secretly rebuked and insulted, and was obliged even to give up the office, the emoluments of which furnished his means of livelihood.

It thus seems that the translation of *Nil Durpan* brought suffering on all those connected with it. We are not blessed with the Spinozian vision of looking things "under the aspect of eternity," otherwise we could have discerned the purpose herein hidden. However, we find that the sufferings of the individual often bring good to the community. It is said whenever the innocent have been persecuted the cause they cherish has ultimately triumphed. History abounds with such wellknown instances that we need not mention them here. However we cite a case because reference was made to it in course of the trial. The *Calcutta Christian Observer* described it as follows :–

> "Mr. Peterson in his speech for the prosecution made a most unfortunate allusion. He warned the Missionaries by the example of Mr. Smith of Demerara! He instanced him as one who had incited slaves to disaffection and had suffered the extreme penalty of law. He was strongly forgetful of facts. The case of Mr. Smith is a warning indeed, but it is a warning against Colonial persecution. That man was falsely charged and cruelly treated by the planters of Demerara, and he died in prison; but very soon the walls of the House of Commons resounded with the eloquence of Sir James Mackinosh and Henry Brougham, the spirit of England was aroused, and nothing probably contributed so much to the downfall of West Indian slavery as that very case."

In his suffering, Mr. Long atoned for the sin of his countrymen, and his name is imperishably associated with the emancipation of the Indigo-slaves in Bengal.

Mr. Long's Letter of the 20 June 1861, referred to in p-81

1. Great publicity having been given to my connection with the publication of a translation of the *Nil Durpan*, I beg leave to submit a brief statement on the subject for consideration. I have to apologise if this statement appears egotistical – but it is written in self-defence. I have been assailed by name and with great virulence, by the newspapers that support the Indigo system, during the last fifteen months, and within the last few weeks I have been threatened with a prosecution for libel by the proprietor of the *Englishman* and by the Planters. I write therefore to explain my true position.

2. During the last ten years of my residence in Calcutta I have been led by circumstances to take a very deep and active interest in that which has excited much attention of late in England–the Vernacular Press as an exponent of the views and feelings of the masses, and as a medium for working on those masses for their improvement. I have also been in connection with the Vernacular Literature Society during the last eight years, as well as with the great cause of Vernacular Education.

3. I have never received, nor would I take from Government or any other party, one *cowrie* as pay for services in this way looking on them as part of my work as a branch of Missionary literary work. Government, however, have encouraged me by publishing some of my reports on the Native Press. In 1855, they published in the Selections of the Bengal Government my 'Return of Authors and Translators in Vernacular Literature & c"; of this 800 copies were printed by the direction of Sir F. Haliday; and of my Classified Catalogue of 1400 Bengali Books and Tracts" (which was also published in 1855) 300 copies were subscribed for by Government, so that the work paid its expenses. Of my Returns relating to the Vernacular Press in 1859, Government also published 500 copies; I have reason to know that these have been of use to the friends of Missions and of Education in India, England, and even in Germany, and that they have called serious attention to the subject of the native press.

4. At my suggestion the Hon'ble Mr. Beadon, when Secretary to the Bengal Government, issued orders requiring annual returns of the Vernacular publications in Bengal. I strongly urged on Sir F. Haliday, when Lieutenant-Governor, the appointement of a curator of the native press to supply full information respecting its progress; a proposition

that met his full concurrence and was only rejected by the Supreme Government on financial grounds. In my examination of native books I was struck with the open way in which obscene books were sold, and the number that were thus put in circulation in Calcutta. I therefore brought the subject before the Legislative Council and a law was passed on the subject, which has worked well in this city A Bengali *Education Gazette* has also been established, and I had much to do with the procuring for it the pecuniary support of Government. This has proved a very useful means of diffusing sound information among the native population.

5. With the view of making known the tendency of the native mind, I have inserted from time to time in the *Hurkaru* newspaper, articles called 'the Spirit of the Native Press' and with the same object I brought to the notice of serveral parties, last year a Bengali Drama called the *Nil Durpan* which though highly colured, appeared to give the native view of the effects of the Indigo Planting system. The dispute had hitherto related to the opinions of Civilians, Merchants and Missionaries, but some were anxious to know the tone of the native press on the subject. The work was already in circulation among the native population, and several persons expressed a desire that it should be translated, for the information of those to whom it was of importance to understand native feeling. It was as an illustration of native feeling and not for the purpose of controversy, that attention was attracted to this publication; but of course in a work like this Drama, which, as stated in the Introduction, is avowedly published to depict the Indigo system as viewed by the Natives at large, there are statements and passages which the purer and more refined taste of an European would reject. Everyman, however, who is acquainted with Oriental literature, knows how prominent these defects are in many Oriental works of high reputation. In the English Translation of the *Nil Durpan* the coarser passages were expunged or softened, and I regret that any that have given offence should have been inadvertently allowed to remain. But any one who will take the trouble to examine the original will find that a good deal has been omitted. With reference to the passage in the native author's preface as to two newspapers, insinuating that they were under the influence of the Planters, I never could have imagined that any English reader would attach importance to the imputation. The insignificance of the sum mentioned as the incentive (thousand rupees or £ 100) seemed to exhibit at once the folly of the charge as applied to newspapers of wide circulation.

That my motive in undertaking to pass the translation through the

press was not malevolent, may be inferred from the conclusion of the Introduction written by me. *"It .... afraid".

6. I myself believe thoroughly in the truth of Lord W. Bentinck's maxim "India must be managed at present by Native agency under European Superintendence." But in order to maintain that European superiority, and on the principle *fas est ab hoste doceri* I believe it would be most useful for Europeans of all classes to see themselves now and then in the mirror of the Native Press. Lord W. Bentinck thought so, when he allowed its criticisms on himself and his administration, –"considering it was an index and safety valve for the public mind." So did the Marquis of Hastings when in 1818, he patronised the *Serampur Durpan* by allowing it to circulate for one fourth the ordinary postage. That paper was under Missionary management and often contained extracts from Native papers freely criticising Europeans and Government. I remember reading in old numbers of that paper translations of most bitter satires from the *Bhaskar* and *Chandrika*, one part of which represented an English Judge drinking brandy on the Bench, and speaking a language none could understand, while his *amlahs* were busily engaged receiving bribes. The late Rev. W. Morton a Missionary, frequently made translations from the Native newspapers, giving extracts hostile to Missionaries and others. I was requested three years ago by the Missionary Conference of Calcutta, to compile a tract giving the opinions of the Native Press for and against Christianity, in order that Missionaries might know the real state of the native mind.

That this regard to native opinion is not inconsistent with a zealous support of British interests, may be proved by a reference to the Hon. F. Shores' most valuable "Notes on Indian affairs." No one more boldly advocated the settlement of Europeans in India thirty years ago than he did, and no one more ably pleaded for their services being used by the State as Justices of the Peace, yet few men ever dwelt more faithfully on the effects produced on the Native mind by the misconduct of his countrymen.

7. It is said that to meddle with such subjects as Indigo is not consistent with the character of a clergyman. I would ask, is not the preservation of peace in India one of his duties? Here in this country is a small number of Europeans in the midst of a vast body of Natives. Few of the former know anything of the Native language or of Native feeling; a volcano may be forming beneath their feet, and dark clouds may

*Page 47 of the *Trial*, lines 18 to 23

be gathering on the horizon of India. Is the watchman then who gives warning to be counted an enemy? If a clergyman knows of a state of Native feeling that may end in bloodshed, is he to give no information of it? It is admitted that in the Indigo district there was and is a state of feeling of this sort. How is it to be brought to the notice of officials and men of influence to put them on their guard? Surely the Native press well indicates what is going on beneath the surface, and is one of the safest guides to genuine Native opinion. I solemnly declare that I know nothing more important for the future security of Europeans in India and the welfare of the country, than that all classes of Europeans should watch the barometer of the native mind. I feel strongly that peace founded on the contentment of the Native population is essential to the welfare of India, and that it is folly to shut our eyes to the warnings the Native Press may give.

Well, would it have been for India had the mutterings of the native press been earlier attended to before the Mutiny. They were neglected and men slept quietly over the brink of volcano. Had translations been made from the native press of the Agra Presidency, indicating the state of feeling towards Government a year before the Mutiny, and had these been communicated to official and other influential persons it is posible that Europeans might not have been taken so unwares with all their arsenals in *Sepoy* hands.

8. A Missionary is pledged – in fact it is his work to rear an indigenous Christianity. I have seen with deep sorrow how much of our Mission work in Bengal, is still too much of a hot-bed system maintained at a heavy cost by the funds of foreigners. Christianity has as yet made comparatively little way among the population of Bengal. In my own observation and experience one of the most prominent causes appears to be the mental, moral and social degradation of the ryot; and here I must reiterate what I wrote in the Introduction to the *Nil Durpan*. *"Attention .... spirit."

It was the conviction that certain social evils were great obstacles to the diffusion of the Gospel, which led the Church Missionary Society and its friends to take an active part in promoting abolition of the slave trade in the West Indies and West Africa, and in the protection of native rights in New Zeland, and which induced the Baptist and Wesleyan Missionary Societies to wage a crusade against West India Slavery, though

*Page 47 of the Trial, lines 1 to 18

their Missionaries were imprisoned by the Planters in Jamaica and other colonies. The same views have led Christian Churches in America to raise their voices against slavery.

9. While I regret that through inadvertence remarks by the native author at which offence has been taken, were allowed to remain in the preface of the *Nil Durpan*, I am thankful that there is little likelihood of a recurrence of similar inadvertence in connection with individual European responsibility, as I trust that ere long the Government will have one of their own servants employed with a suitable establishment for the purpose of keeping the authorities acquainted with native opinion in its bearings on general questions. But while I regret the publication through inadvertence of any expressions or passages that have given offence, I must be allowed to add, that it does seem strange that my complaints on this subject should proceed from those Calcutta Newspapers that have supported the Indigo system, or from the Planters who circulated "*Brahmins and Pariahas*" – for I think that I may appeal to any man who has resided here since the beginning of 1860, and ask if he remembers in the annals of modern controversy, greater virulence and bitterness than the organs of the Planters have exhibited in their repeated attacks on the Government, the Missionaries, and those officers of Government with whose measures they have been dissatisfied. I might append to this statement numerous most violent and acrimonious extracts from those papers, and leave all candid men to judge if the liberty of the Press has not been abused and if native writers have seen in their European contemporaries any example of moderation. In my own case and in the case of Mr. Bomwetsch, some of our friends wished actions for libel to be instituted, but we have been content hitherto, as the officers of Government have been, to bear the revilings of those journals in silence.

10. It has been alleged that I vouch for the entire truth of every statement in the Drama. I do nothing of the kind. I never meant to do it. All that was intended, all that ought fairly to be deduced, is that in many instances, according to general opinion, and popular report and belief, the effect of the Indigo system on native families has been as ruinous as the Drama represents.

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CHAPTER VII

INDIGO INDUSTRY.

It now remains to designate the dispute between the planter and the ryot, from an economical point of view. Mr. J. M. Macleod, a member of the Indian Law Commission pointed out so far back as 1835, that the appellation "Indigo Planter" was a misnomer. They ought with more propriety be termed "Indigo manufacturer." In fact they were really manufacturers of the blue dye, and by far the greater part of them were no more planters than the money-lenders who supply capital to ryots for the cultivation of rice, sugarcane, or any other sort of produce. The correct relation between the planter and the ryot, had been described by the Indigo Commissioners, as that between manufacturer and producer and not between capitalist and labourer.

For the better understanding of the commercial aspect of the disturbance, it is necessary to know all the stages through which indigo passes as an article of commerce. The methods of cultivation have already been described and we take this opportunity of informing our readers of the methods of sowing and manufacture of Indigo. The following account relating to the several processes is quoted from Sir William Hunter's "Statistical Account of Bengal," with slight addition, from the Report of the Indigo Commission, to make it conform to the time of which we are speaking.

The sowing takes place twice in a year. The Autumn or October sowing commences from the third week of September and lasts till the end of October. As soon as the floods have subsided the seed is scattered broad cast on the alluvial lands along the rivers. These lands require very little ploughing; and the mere dragging of the stump of a plantain tree over the field is sufficient to cover the seed. But a better class of sowing is preceded by the plough. October sowings are also made on *dengali* or high lands, and the sites of deserted homesteads. The advantage of October sowing is that the plant is hardier, and can stand more rain than that sown in the spring plant. The yield of the dye however is not great as from the spring plant nor is the quality quite so good.

The spring sowing takes place from the beginning of February to the middle or end of May. When early showers fall, the lighter soils are generally sown first, as they are more easily soked and are also more retentive of the moisture during the drought that is sure to follow. The stronger soils are sown when the heavy showers fall, generally at the end of April or beginning of May. The spring Indigo flourishes well if it get alternate heat and showers. Spring Indigo however is more precarious than the autumn crop though its yield is larger than the latter crop.

Indigo is not so exhausting a crop as is sometimes supposed; and it is stated that a field will yield a good harvest of rice, even if sown with indigo for five years in succession. It is of great service to the agriculturist in the due rotation of crops.

The lands most suitable for indigo cultivation are the low alluvial soils along the banks of the rivers, which are annually enriched by fertilizing inundations. Next come the half-clay half-sandy soils, and lastly, the strong black soils. The last class of land often gives the best return of all, but it requires favourable wheather, otherwise the crop is a very precarious one. As soon as the plant is ready it is made up into bundles each measuring 6 ft. in circumference and made over to the factory. The Indigo in these bundles is packed in double lengths placed stem outwards and leaf inwards, exactly as the two sheaves of corn are made into one, with the ears turned inwards. The money value per acre of this plant to the cultivator varies from Rs. 6-12 to Rs. 3-6. When there is a crop of seed grown from the stumps of the indigo, it is considered the right of the factory to buy the produce at a certain rate per *maund*, for future sowing.

Two methods are pursued to extract the indigo from the plant. The first effects it by fermentation of the fresh leaves and stems, the second by maceration of the dried leaves, – the latter process being most advantageous.

(i) From the fresh leaves – Each indigo factory contains several large stone built cisterns arranged in pairs. Of these pair of cisterns or vats, the bottom of one is nearly upon a level with the top of the second, inorder to allow the contents being run out of the one into the other. The

uppermost of the pair is called the fermenting vat, or the steeper; and the lowermost, the beating vat. The cuttings of the plant as they come from the field are laid out in rows in the steeping vat, till it is filled within five or six inches of its brim. Water is pumped upon the plants till it stands within an inch or two of the top of the vat, the plants being kept down by means of logs of wood and bamboos being placed over them. An active fermentation speedily commences, which is completed in fourteen or fiften hours. Nine or ten hours after the immersion of the plant, frothy bubbles appear, which rise like little pyramids. They are at first of a white colour, but soon become grey-blue and then a deep purple red. The fermentation is by these time violent, the fluid is in constant commotion, innumerable bubbles rise to the surface, a dense copper-coloured scum covers the whole. As long as the liquor is agitated, the fermentation must not be disturbed; but when it becomes more tranquil, the liquor is to be drawn off into the lower cistern. It is of the utmost consequence not to push the fermentation too far, because the quality of the whole indigo is deteriorated; but rather to cut it short, in which case there is, indeed, a loss of weight, but the article is better. The liquor possesses now a glistening yellow colour, which, when the indigo precipitates, changes to green. The average temperature of the liquor is commonly 85°Fahr; its specific gravity at the surface is 1·0015; and at the bottom, 1·003.

As soon as the liquor has been run into the lower cistern, ten men are set to work to beat it with paddles. Meanwhile, other labourers remove the exhausted plant from the upper vat, set it to dry for fuel, clean out the vessel and place fresh plants in it. The fermented plant appears still green but it has lost three fourths of its bulk in the process, or from twelve to fourteen percent of its weight, chiefly water and extractive matter. The liquor in the lower vat must be strongly beaten for an hour and a half when the indigo begins to precipitate. This is the moment for judging whether there has been any error committed in the fermentation, which must be corrected by beating. If the fermentation has been defective, much froth rises in the beating, and then a reddish tinge appears. If large round granulations are formed, the beating is continued, in order to see if they will grow smaller. If they become as small as fine sand, and if the water clears up, the indigo is allowed quietly to subside.

Should the vat have been over fermented, a thick fat-looking crust covers the liquor. In such a case the beating must be moderated. Whenever the granulations become round and begin to subside, and the liquor clears up, the beating must be discontinued. The colour of the liquor when drawn out of the steeper into the beater, is bright green; but as soon as the agglomerations of the Indigo commence, it assumes the colour of Madeira wine, and soon afterwards, in the course of beating, a small round grain is formed, which precipitates when the water gradually becomes transparent and all the turpidity and froth disappear.

In the front of the beater a beam is fixed up right, in which three or more holes are pierced, a few inches in diameter. These are closed with plugs during the beating; but two or three hours afterwards, as the indigo subsides, the upper plug is withdrawn in order to run off the superabundant liquor, and then the lower plugs are drawn out in succession. The state of this liquor being examined, affords an indication of the success of both the processes of fermentation and beating. When the whole liquor is run off, a labourer enters the vat, sweeps all the precipitate into one corner, and empties the thinner portion into a spout which leads into a cistern alongside a boiler. When all this is collected it is strained, passed into the boiler and heated. The froth soon subsides, and leaves an oily-looking film upon the liquor. The indigo is by this process not only freed from the yellow extractive matter, but is enriched in the intensity of its colour, and increased in weight. After boiling two or three hours, the mixture is run from the boiler into a general receiver or cistern called a dripping vat, and having a false bottom. This cistern stands in a water-tight basin of masonry, the bottom of which slopes to one end, in order to facilitate the drainage. A thick woollen web is stretched along the bottom of the inner vessel to act as a filter. As long as the liquor passes through turbid, it is pumped back into the receiver. Whenever it runs clear, the receiver is covered with another piece of cloth, and it is allowed to drain at its leisure. Next morning the drained magma is put into a strong bag and squeezed in a press. The indigo is then carefully taken out of the bag and cut into sqares of about three cubic inches, which are dried upon shelves of wicker work. During the drying, a whitish eflorescence forms upon the pieces, which must be carefully removed with a brush.

(2) Indigo from dried leaves – The ripe plant being cropped, is dried in the sun during two days, and then thrashed, in order to separate the stems from the leaves. The newly-dried leaves must be free from spots, and friable between the fingers. When kept dry, the leaves undergo a great change in the course of a few weeks, their beautiful green tint turning into a pale blue-grey. Previous to this change, the leaves afford no indigo. The process of extracting the indigo from the dried leaves is as follows :– The leaves are infused in the steeping vat with six times their bulk of water, and allowed to macerate for two hours, the mixture being continually stirred till all the leaves sink. The fine green liquor is then drawn off into the beater vat, for if it remained longer in the steeper, some of the indigo would settle among the leaves and be lost. The process of manufacturing with dry leaves possesses this advantage, that a provision of the plant may be made at the most suitable time independently of the vicissitudes of the weather, and the indigo may be more uniformly made. Moreover, the fermentation process in the case of the fresh leaves is here superseded by a much shorter period of simple maceration. The process of obtaining the indigo from the *nerium* is almost exactly the same from the dried leaves as in the case of the fresh plant, but hot water is generally applied to the dried leaves.

Indigo thus manufactured goes to the Calcutta marts and thence shipped as an article of commerce. The indigo manufactured on this side of India is of prime quality and that of Lower Bengal, especially which is produced in the districts of Nuddea and Jessore, is probably the very finest. The annual outturn of this dye on this side of India for the season, about the time of the disturbance averages 1,05,000 maund and the value of this would be nearly two crores of Rupees. According to later statistics the export from Bengal once rose to the highest figures of 99402 cwts. The most notable feature in the indigo trade is the diminishing proportion sent direct to England, and the wide distribution to other countries which comprise, the United Kingdom, France, Egypt, the United States, Austria, Persia and Italy.

It is beyond dispute that indigo is one of the most important of Indian exports. Sir William Hunter says it is one of the oldest, and, until

the introduction of tea planting, it ranked as the most important of the Indian staples grown by European capital. It is admitted by all that British capitalists have done a service to the country in having greatly increased its material resources. Indeed, it is great relief to us, after the painful duty of placing befor the readers the dark side of the picture, to acknowledge the advantages set forth by the planters as due to their presence. We are glad to give prominence to the fact that wherever indigo planters had established themselves, whole tracts of jungles had been cleared away, and that the clearance of jungle was in nearly all instances followed by an addition to the number of the villagers, and in this way social comfort was promoted. Nor must we omit to mention here that we are pleased to find in the pamphlet the "Brahmins and Parishs" Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Babu Dwarka Nath Tagore paying tributes of graceful compliments and gratitude to the planters for the good performed by them to the natives of this country. The Indigo Commissioners were also not silent in acknowledging the services of the European capitalists. We read in their Report :-

> "The presence of Europeans, their attention to business, the help they give to Officials, their energy in clearing jungles, and in aiding in the formation of roads, the check they give to abuses, their yearly circulation of large sums of money, are all things to be admired and valued."

These advantages however carry with them the potentiality of evil, and the Commissioners were obliged to qualify their remarks with the following reservations :-

> "But these benefits will be more freely felt, and more openly acknowledged, whenever the whole system whall have undergone a thorough reformation, and when indigo can be cultivated under such circumstance as shall remove even the bare apprehension of agrarian rising and popular discontent."

Though we cannot speak too highly of the importance of European capital and European supervision in the history of the Indigo Industry in Bengal, we should not forget at the same time that the cultivators of Bengal played no insignificant part in the production of the dye. The Indigo Commissioners justly observed :-

> "We must discountenance an erroneous notion that the labour of the ryot costs him nothing, on the ground that he in the performance of

his contract, with his own muscles drives his own plough, behind his own bullocks, over lands of which he is the undoubted occupant. The bullocks, the implements, the time and the labour of the ryot represent to him his *capital*; and it is quite certain that in the populous districts of Lower Bengal, such labour has a market value. We need hardly use further arguments to set before His Honour one of the first principles of political economy. Our object is simply to shew that until the plant reaches the vats in the factory no share in the labour of producing it has been borne by the planter. He has given his advances, and his seed. Every thing else, the land, the labour and the risk is the ryot's."

The remarks quoted above will explain the disagreement between the planters and the Government of Bengal, in respect of the politico-economic character of the Indigo dispute. The planters in their Memorial to Lord Canning tried to establish that the difference between them and the ryots was a dispute between capital and labour and that their vast stake was going to be sacrified at the altar of the so-called philanthropy of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Sir John Peter Grant, however, was not the person to pass unnoticed any charge against him however preposterous. He discussed at length the points raised and as his remarks have furnished us with a clear description of the situation we give them below :–

"The Commercial disagreement is designated a dispute between capital and labour and I am accused of especial indiscretion, on the ground that such is the character of the dispute. I am aware of no such dispute. Some few instances have been reported to me in which manufacturers of indigo have found difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of *coolies*, and sufficient boats and carts; but in all these cases the difficulty was overcome, eventually by the good sense of parties, and sometimes with the help of the good offices of the Magistrates, in the natural and proper way of an adjustment of rates. The disagreement actually existing is between the manufacturers of the dye, and the producers of the plant, which is the raw material of the dye. Both these classes are capitalists, and so far from it being that the capital of the producers is so small comparatively, that they may be truly described, for practical purposes, as labourers, this capital in the aggregate, infinitely exceeds the capital of all the manufacturers of Indigo dye. The capital of the ryot is in his land, his crops and his cattle, and in very many cases, in his means of hiring labourers over and above the value of his own bodily labour.

The whole cultivation of Bengal is in his hands; and the ruin of this mighty interest would be the ruin of the country. The capital of the manufacturer of indigo dye is partly in his manufacturing premises and untensils, and in his means of hiring labourers, but mainly in the debts due to him by the former class of capitalists *viz.* the ryots.

Both the interests are capitalists of great national importance, and both should be treated not only with justice but with consideration. A Government which should approach the question with any less impartial view of it than this would err as much in point of sound economical policy as in point of fair dealing."

It is said out of evil cometh good, and the indigo disturbance froms no exception. Nowhere do we find such faithful adherence to the spirit of the great Proclamation of 1858, which immediately preceded the event. The doings of Sir John Peter Grant in Bengal, and the ultimate findings of Sir Charles Wood in England came like trailing clouds of glory from the throne of Her Gracious Majesty. Even the shades of the Counter of Commerce could not darken the fresh splendour of the Magna Charta granted by the Sovereign-Mother to her various Indian subjects. The ryots of Bengal, after all, enjoyed 'immunity from oppression and blessings of peace.' However, Time casts its shadow over all, and there is no wonder if the beaming light of the solemn pledge has fainted and faded far. But the memorable assumption of the direct rule over the Indian people by Her Gracious Majesty, has been followed in the natural march of events by the Coronation of her son. It has been described by his Representative here as 'a landmark in the history of the people and a chapter in the ritual of the State.' We hope the Royal Message proclaimed on such an occasion will scatter away all darkness and ring in a still brighter era of just, equitable, and benevolent Government. We conclude with the prayer of his Excellency the Viceroy, which will no doubt be, remembered as historic utterances –

" – that the well-being of his subjects may grow from day to day, and the administration of his officers may be stamped with wisdom and virtue."

THE END

REPORT

OF

THE NIL DARPAN CASE

(Taken from the "Bengal Harkaru, 1861")

CALCUTTA SUPREME COURT

CRIMINAL SESSIONS;

BEFORE

SIR MORDAUNT WELLS KT.

The Queen on the prosecution of,

WALTER BRETT *versus* JAMES LONG

—~—

First day–July 19th, 1861.

The indictment charged the prisoner under several counts, with publishing a pamphlet called the *Nil Darpan* containing libellous matter against the Editor of the *Englishman.*

Mr. Peterson and *Mr. Cowie* for the prosecution, *Mr. Eglinton* and *Mr. Newmarch* for the defence.

A special jury was summoned. Some delay was occasioned in empanelling them owing to only seventeen gentlemen of the 24 sommoned being present Many of them were challenged on the part of the prosecution, but as the number was less, those who were called were obliged to be sworn.

The following are the names of the jury–A. Eglinton, Esq., Foreman.

S. Apcar, Esq., L. A. D'Souza, Esq., C. Weskins, Esq., J. W. Roberts, Esq., Manickjee Rustomjee, Esq., W. B. Bailey, Esq., E. Creighton, Esq., E. Palmer, Esq., R. Blenchynden, Esq., J. Nott, Esq., and W. S. Atkinson, Esq.

MR. PETERSON in opening the case for the prosecution said, that the jury were called upon to determine a case which he need hardly tell them was one of very considerable importance. It would be idle for him to attempt to disguise the fact for whom he was appearing. He appeared for Mr. Walter Brett, one of the parties calumniated, and the gentlemen who paid for this prosecution were the members of the Land-holders' Association. He, though it necessary to state this before his learned friends enquired into and misconstrued the motives of this prosecution and told them that the party who was proceeding against Mr. Long was a mere puppet and the strings were pulled by some

persons behind the scene. He was sorry that he should be bound to appear against a gentleman in holy orders. But whatsoever be his denomination, his position or his private character, he felt aggrieved that a person filling a holy commission and a learned minister of the church, should have propagated scandal of so vile a nature, and then calumniated and slandered no one individual alone, but a whole body, who have been held up to public odium and denounced as men guilty of the vilest acts which the catalogue of crimes could disclose. It would be idle for him to tell them of what had taken place. They were aware of the unhappy differences that had taken place between non-official planters and certain parties, the ryots of Lower Bengal, and he would not hesitate to say that the pamphlet, which was the subject of the present prosecution, was written to throw public obloquy and odium upon that body. No person could object to any man writing or commenting upon the public acts of anybody or community, provided he kept within the legitimate bounds. If particular acts of individuals were held up, be they officials or non-officials, he should be the last person to object to it ; but the present publication was quite a different thing. It was like a person stabbing in the dark because he could not get at them in any other way. When they came to consider the case, they would find it was not planters alone who were to complain, but it affected every Englishman in India, and he felt that in the present case he was not simply doing his duty to his clients, but he was himself interested in the matter, and he thought it concerned him as much as the body who had been maligned. Strong abuses required strong remedies, and they could not conceal what had occurred. Last Sessions he was prepared to go on with the case. The printer Mr. Manuel was indicted. They knew fully well that if they got the calf they would soon get the cow. Manuel pleaded guilty and gave up the name of the publisher who was the Reverend gentleman, and he now stood in the room of the printer. He would now go into the question of the libel. Any person had a right to publish work whether it be against the private or public acts of any individual. If he does so he must do it at his own peril, and the party calumniated has his remedy. Perhaps it might be asked why not treat this as a civil action ? He would answer that question by saying that no civil remedy lay by a body of men who have been calumniated and their action must therefore be made the subject of an indictment and commitment. He regretted that his clients had not the opportunity by a civil action of doing the gentleman the justice of proving the truth of the acts of atrocities mentioned in the libel. It was a libel which came under the Section 34th of Fox's Act, but which was not extended to this country. That was a declaratory act and gave the jury the power of determining whether the publication was a libel or no libel. But before the passing of that Act, the question was entirely left with the Judge. So long as the defendant was entitled to Fox's Act, it would be necessary for the prosecution to shew that in publishing this pamphlet the defendant had been actuated by malice. He (Mr. Peterson) did not think there would be the slightest difficulty in proving this.

Not only from the nature of the publication itself, but the manner in which it had been circulated, the jury he was certain would come to the conclusion that the party who would publish such a foul calumny pointed against so respectable a body could not have acted otherwise. He would show them that there was scarcely a crime recorded in the calender but that the planters had been guilty of, according to this publication which was as gross and villainous a production that had ever been issued from a press. Perhaps it might be suggested that although the gentleman published it, still he was neither the translator nor the author. But he would ask for what purposes was it translated and published ? It was published for one of the most mischievous purposes that could well be conceived. But there were certain things commented upon that pamphlet which would convince them that it was not translated by a native as it was stated on the title page. As for saying that the pamphlet has been published and circulated for the purpose of showing the feelings of the natives, was perfectly absurd and ridiculous. Now there was an expression used in the original namely the word *'soorkee'* which every native would tell them meant a short spear, but the word was translated into "brick dust makers"; therefore it could not be translation of a native who had been assisted by the Reverend gentleman for the simple and very harmless purpose of propagating the truth. But he would show them and there was a good deal in the internal evidence to show it, that the author might have been some Hindu, but the translation could never have been made by a Hindu but by an Englishman. There were certain parts of the libel for the publishing of which the shadow of an excuse could not be shown, and it was quite evident that the intention was some other than that of showing the feeling of the natives towards the Englishman in this country. If the jury were of opinion that the defendant had disseminated this foul libel for the good of the country and society, to show up the wrongs of the Englishman for persecuting the natives, and that virtually he had not been actuated by any malice, then the whole thing must fall to the ground. It would be for them to say on the whole whether the present case could be treated as one in which a person influenced by a conscientious discharge of his duty and acting with the best of motives, published to the world the mis-doings of a body without in the slightest degree intending to cast obloquy and odium upon them. He was certain that when they became acquainted with the real facts of this libel and its mischievous tendency they would at once cast away the notion that the party intended no harm. That it was not a cruel and malicious attack, concocted with the deliberate intention of bringing into contempt a body whose faults had been nothing more than that they stood out for their rights and liberties as Englishmen. He did not think there could be the slightest excuse shown for the publication of so filthy a production ? However, if any excuse could be shown the jury would have nothing to do with that as it would be a question for the consideration of the Court in mitigation of punishment. As to justfication that was quite out of the question in the present case. It was quite unnecessary for

him to refer them to the numerous law cases to show them what a libel was. His Lordship would point out to them the law bearing on the case. It was not simply a libel in the legal acceptation of the term. A question might possible be raised how far the indictment could be drawn on the part of a body or class of men like the Indigo Planters. But he would show them that this could be done. In the case of *Rex. versus Williams*, and *King versus Osborne* it was held that such an indictment could be field. He would also refer them to the celebrated case of the Portuguese Jews. In this case the objection was taken and the question was fully discussed whether an action could be brought by a body of men whose character had been affected by the publication of a libel. It was decided by the highest legal authority that it was immaterial whether the libel was against a single individual or a body, and the parties calumniated could seek redress in the form in which the present action was framed. He would proceed to detail the circumstances of the case. Now he thought he would be able to prove beyond all doubt the fact that the pamphlet was published by the defendant. He had not been able to find out the manuscript itself, but he would be able to show that the manuscript from which printer set up the poisonous matter was in the hand-writing of the defendant. He would also show that between (450 and 500) copies of the work were published by Mr. Long, and where they were published. He did not suppose the jury would believe him when he told them that his great publication was received and circulated by one of the highest officers of the Government of Bengal which had been the receptacle of this vile and infamous production which was sent into the world to show the feelings of the natives towards their English brethren, to teach them how they should walk in the paths of virtue and to amend their conduct. It was not to cast obloquy or odium upon them but bring about a reformation. To effect this the Reverend Gentleman used the means of propagating slander. He would prove every single word he uttered, and his learned friends for the defence would have every opportunity of rebutting and disproving them. They might make use of anything they like provided they put in evidence to prove it. All he could say was that the man must necessarily be a fanatic : or a man of a very strong constitution who would put forth such a production. It had been said that this precious work had been published for the cause of humanity and that sort of thing. It was no doubt to show that the natives had been victimised and with a view most likely to prejudice the other class. If such was their opinion then all the expression of truth must fall to the ground, and whether what he propagated was the truth or not had nothing whatever to do with the question of its being a libel. It would take a considerable time for him to go through the various counts. It will be his duty to prove them and bring home the convictions, but it will be for the jury to say whether the defendant had been actuated by a sense of justice in publishing them. Now it was quite evident that this pamphlet related to native labor and English capital, and if the statement and the charges contained in it were true, he might

say that every Judge and Magistrate in lower Bengal and even the Government of Bengal were put upon their trial. The parties libelled were not the planters alone though the shots were principally levelled at them, but serious charges were made in the pamphlet which concerned every Magistrate and Judge in the district, and though they had been maligned and even the late head of the Government, still no person had the courage of coming forward and bringing about this prosecution. In the first place look at the introduction. Probably it would be said that this was a drama and dealt broadly in caricatures. But as long as drama deal with arson, forgery and robbery and every other crime, the caricature drôps to the ground and it becomes the vehicle of scandal and slander. The press and the drama might lawfully put forth their productions provided they were done in good humour and related to the manners and customs of a particular society. Where would the satirist be if he were to indulge in such calumnies. He would now take them to the author's preface and the introduction because in them he sets forth and gives his reason for the publication and treated it as a fact, and in doing so it was not necessary for him (Mr. Peterson) to prove that it was written by the defendant or not. He would call upon the gentleman of the Jury--he did not see that any of them were Indigo Planters or directly interested in Indigo-- to give a clean and dispassionate verdict, and he would ask them not to strain a single point one way or the other, but to give their verdict, with strict justice and impartiality. He would now read the inducement set forth in the first part of the indictment.

[The speaker then read the count and read the extracts from the *Nil Darpan* upon which the count was framed.]

The preface stated-"The Editors of two daily news-papers are filling their columns with your praises, and whatever other people may think, you never enjoy pleasure from it, since you know fully the reason of their so doing. What a surprising power of attraction silver has. The detestable Judas gave the great preacher of the Christian religion, Jesus, into the hands of odious Pilate for the sake of thirty rupees; what wonder, then, if the proprietors of the two news-papers, becoming enslaved by the hope of gaining one thousand rupees, throw the poor helpless people of this land into the terrible grasp of your mouths." This was the matter of inducement, and it will be for the jury to say whether the two dailies alluded to were not the *Englishman* and *Harkaru* and he would call several witnesses who would satisfy them on that point. It clearly pointed that the editors had taken a thousand rupees to adopt the views and expressions of the Planters. It was said why should the planters of Lower Bengal take umbrage at this production. Could it be said for a moment that the planters of any other part of India were alluded to. It was very important that they should satisfy themselves that the parties meant were the planters of Lower Bengal. There could be no doubt that it was intended to show that the cause of the disturbance had arisen by the treatment, the ryots of Lower Bengal had received from the planters, and in consequence of such disturbance the authorities had to investigate into the oppression of the

Indigo Planters. Now they might safely infer that such a case of lawlessness had been supposed to exit long before the *Nil Darpan* was published and if he could only show that one hundredth part of the charges preferred against the planters were mentioned in that pamphlet, it would be sufficient for his purpose and they would have to judge whether the statement put forth in it was what could be called a fair and legitimate line of comment, and when he would read the indictment they would have very little doubt in coming to the conclusion that the intention of the writer was nothing more than to bring the planters to disrepute and to cast obloquy upon them. It was clear that the motive of the writer was to extol the vices of the white race and exaggerate the miseries of the ryot. It was impossible to give evidence as to who the writer was.This much was evident that it was the concoction of some person under the assumed name of a native who set out the mirror and its translation. No native, he would take upon himself to say, even if he were accustomed to English habits and English notions would have translated it. C. H. Manuel, as he had told them before, was indicted and was compelled to give up the name of the publisher. He would now proceed to read the introduction.

MR. EGLINTON.—I submit my learned friend has no right to read the introduction as it is not set forth in the indictment.

THE JUDGE.—I will hold that both the defendant and the prosecutor will be at liberty to infer any passage in this book.

MR. PETERSON RESUMED.—The introduction ran thus :—"The original Bengali of this Drama the *Nil Darpan* or Indigo Planting Mirror–having excited considerable interest, a wish was expressed by various Europeans to see a translation of it. This has been made by a native; both the original and translation are *bonafide* native productions and depict the Indigo Planting system as viewed by natives-at large. The drama is a favorite mode with the Hindus for describing certain state of society, manners and customs. Since the days of Sir. W. Jones, by scholars at Paris, St. Petersburgh and London, the Sanskrit drama has, in this point of view, been highly appreciated. The Bengali drama imitates in this respect its Sanskrit parent. The evils of–Kulin Brahminism, widow-marriage prohibition, quackery, fanaticism have been depicted by it with great effect, nor has the system of Indigo Planting escaped notice; hence the origin of this work the *Nil Darpan* which though exhibiting no marvellous or very tragic scenes, yet in simple homely language gives the "annals of the poor" pleads the cause of those who are the feeble; it describes a respectable ryot, a, peasant proprietor happy with his family in the enjoyment of his land till the Indigo system compelled him to take advances, to neglect his own land, to cultivate crops which beggared him, reducing him to the conditions of a serf and a vagabond; the effect of this on his home, Children, and relatives, are pointed out in language plain but true; it shows how arbitrary power debased the lord as well as the peasant; reference is also made to the partiality of various Magistrates in favour of planters and to the Act of last year penally enforcing Indigo con-

tracts. Attention has of late years been directed by Christian Philanthropists to the condition of ryots of Bengal, their tortures and the oppression which they suffer; and the conclusion arrived at is there is little prospect or possibility of ameliorating the mental, moral or spiritual conditions of the ryots without giving him security of landed tenure. If the Bengal ryot is to be treated as a serf, or a mere squatter or day labourer, the missionary, the school master, even the developer of the resources of India, will find their work like that of Sisyphus–vain and useless. Statistics have proved that in France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Saxony, the education of the peasant, along with the security of tenure, he enjoys, on his small farms, has encouraged industrious, temperate, virtuous and cleanly habits, fostered a respect for property, increased social comforts, cherished a spirit of healthy and active independence improved the cultivation of the land, lessened pauparism and has rendered the people, averse to revolution, and friends of order. Even Russia is carrying out a grand scheme of serf emancipation in this spirit. It is the earnest wish of the writer of these lines that harmony may be speedily established between the planter and ryot, that mutual interests may bind the two classes together, and that the European may be in mofussil the protecting Ægis of the peasant who may be able "to set each man under his mango and tamarind tree, none daring to make him afraid."

Now one great point which was that of identity, was produced by the libel itself.

The scene commenced with J. J. Wood, but there were one or two fictitious characters to give it the semblame of fiction. As he understood the *Nil Darpan* was a blue mirror. Everything relating to Indigo was represented in its worst features. It was a representation of a general system, the effect of which was to show up to the world the virtues of one class and the vices of the other. The language was plain and unmistakable. The violence of the Indigo Planters, their wives and daughters were all treated in this mirror. Reference was also made to the administration of justice ; the Magistrates and Judges were attacked, even the late Lieutenant Governor Sir Frederick Halliday. With the exception of one or two Magistrates and the present Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal who was a gold deal buttered, the others were all pronounced to be bad and charged with injustice and partiality. Although the gentleman tried to conceal himself under the garb of sanctity, still in the end he betrayed himself. By reading several passages in this pamphlet, the jury would see that the planters as a body are pointed out in as clear a manner as words could describe them. He would now read the preface : "I present the Indigo planting mirror to the Indigo Planter's hands, now let every one of them having observed his face erase the freckle of the stain of selfishness from his forehead and in its stead place on it the sandal powder of beneficence, then shall I think my labour sucessful ; good fortune for the helpless Ryot, and preserva-

tion of England's honor. Oh, ye Indigo Planters ! your malevolent conduct has brought a stain upon the English nation which was so graced by the ever memorable names of Sydney, Howard, and Hall and other great men. Is your desire for money so very powerful that through the instigation of that vain wealth you are engaged in making hole like rust in the long acquired and pure fame of the British people. Abstain now from that unjust conduct through which you are raising immense sums as your profits, and then the poor people with their families will be able to spend their days in ease. You are now a days purchasing things worth a hundred rupees by expending only ten and you will know what great trouble the ryots are suffering from that. Still you are not willing to make that known, being entirely given up to the acquisition of money. You say that some amongst you give donations to schools and also medicine in the time of need. But the Planters' donations to schools are more odious than the application of the shoe for the destruction of a milch cow, and their grants of medicine are like unto mixing the inspissated milk in the cup of poison. If the application of a little turpentine after beating by Shamachand (an instrument made of leather used by the planters for beating the ryots) be forming a dispensary, then it may be said that in every factory there is a dispensary. The editors of two daily papers are filling their columns with your praises and whatever other people may think, you never enjoy pleasure from it, since you know fully the reason of their so doing. What a surprising power silver has ? The detestable Judas gave the great preacher of the Christian religion, Jesus into the hands of the odious Pilate for the sake of thirty rupees, what wonder then, if the proprietors of two news-papers becoming ensalved by the hope of gaining one thousand rupees, throw the poor helpless people of this land into the terrible grasp of your mouths *But misery and happiness revolve like a wheel* and that the sun of happiness is about to shed his light on the people of this country, is becoming very probable. The most kind-hearted Queen Victoria, the mother of the people, thinking it unadvisable to suckle her children through maid-servants has now taken them on her own lap to nourish them. The most learned intelligent, brave and open hearted Lord Canning is now the Governor General of India; Mr. Grant who always suffers in the sufferings of his people and is happy when they are happy, who punishes the wicked and supports the good, has taken charge of the Lieutenant-Governor ship and other persons, as Messrs. Eden Herschel, &c. &c. who are well known for their love of truth, for their great experience and strict inpartiality are continually expanding themselves lotus-like on the surface of the lake of the civil service. Therefore it is becoming fully evident that these great men will very soon take hold of the rod of justice in order to stop the sufferings which the ryots are enduring from the great giant the Indigo Planter.

Now he thought it was needless for him to give any explanation regarding this preface, and before he went into the question of beating

it would be important that they should know whether that was the only thing that a planter resorted to in the mofussil. He would ask them if their kansamah wanted to catch a fowl whether he would throw some grain and endeavour to get it by that means, or he would resort to stone. The man who beats fared the worst. The moment he was known as a "*marpeet*" not a single ryot would approach him. It was intended that this pamphlet should go forth to England, that the planter and his doings should be misrepresented, and poison the English mind. Now he must certainly say that a more scandalous and unwarranted libel against a respectable class, he never heard of. It had been set up as a sham to heal the wounds and for the recovery of the tortured natives. That was the language of the pamphlet and which would be most willingly swallowed by Mr. Layard and communicated to the British nation. It was done to get up an indignation and to strike at the root, the growing of Indigo. He was glad that this matter had come before a court of justice, where it will be shown that was ever not the impression of the native, and the filling supposed to be entertained by him towards the English was far from what the pamphlet represented it to be. One could hardly contemplate the mischief it was calculated to create. Having been issued from a Government office it was made to appear that it was published by the authority of the Government and whatever was stated by the author, the Government had believed to be true. It was the duty of the defendant as a missionary to have contradicted the statements in the pamphlet instead of giving them greater publicity by translating it. He ought to have told the people that it was an exaggerated representation of the system and they should not believe it. That for the faults of one or two men they were not to condemn a whole body. If the system was bad was it of any good to publish such a libel ? Was such a production to come from a missionary of the church of Christ ? It was not his (Mr. Peterson) business to point out the difference between the original and the translation. They would see the crafty work of the missionary in this passage "The Editors of two daily papers are filling their columns with your praises, and whatever other people may think, you never enjoy pleasure from it, since you know fully the reason of their so doing What a surprising power of attraction silver has? The detestable Judas gave the great preacher of the Christian religion, Jesus into the hands of the odious Pilate for the sake of thirty rupees." Why compare Judas Iscariot ? Where was the excuse for a missionary? As a Christian missionary it was one of the most indelicate libels he could have written. He was not prepared to say that this passage was in the original but at all events one could have expected that a missionary would have omitted that part of it. Mr. Brett came forward and he had a right to come forward, since he had been charged with prostituting his press for the sake of a few hundred rupees. Perhaps it would be asked Why is Mr. Brett alone here when two daily papers were set forth. It was not necessary that the editor and manager of the *Harkaru*

should be included in the prosecution. Now to revert to the preface. One could not help seeing the quantity of rancid butter that had been heaped upon the present Governor. He was the most learned, intelligent, brave and open-hearted, thinking no doubt that this would all be swallowed up as praise. It was a piece of trickery to carry favour of the authorities. Then the Lieutenant-Governor who always suffers in the sufferings of his people and is happy when they are happy. He could not be happy now, for the ryots were not. (laughter) He hoped, however, he enjoyed more happiness (renewed laughter). Then came the Messrs. Eden and Herschel who were continually expanding themselves lotus-like on the surface of the lake of the civil service. Well he did not know how many lotuses there were, but he hoped the gentlemen were making themselves comfortable on the smooth lake (Great laughter). Then came the great giant *Rahu* who is supposed to eat the moon during the time of the eclipse of the sun. Without drawing further on the imagination of natives or Europeans the great giant is represented *uno disce omnes* as the devourer of Ryots; decoying them away in the dark and so forth. Before he went into the *dramatis personae* he would give them a slight introduction as to the virtues and vices of the opposite class. There was so much virtue in the one that vice was no longer triumphant. It commenced with happiness and ended with misery; every person was dying from the violence of the planter.

Whether the drama was the mode of depicting native society or not, it was intended by this production to hold up the general body of Englishmen to the odium of the native population. He would now read to them Act I, scene II.

The learned council then read numerous passages commenting upon each and explaining to the jury its drift and aim. After which now he concluded with the following remarks :–

He must now resume the thread of his argument. He believed he had quoted enough to give the jury an idea of the contents of this scandalous and mischievous production. He had summed up the funeral scene of the once happy *Sadu* and his family. He would now proceed to make his remarks and they might draw their own conclusions. He would leave them to say whether it was libel or no libel; defendant guilty or not guilty. He had pointed out the leading features of the work. The planters had killed the *Kafir,* virtue had been destroyed and vice left triumphant. Do they believe that to be the state of society in the mofussil? He would ask what business has any person to publish any thing calculated to set one race against another. Was society in such a state that it required the aid of the missionary's pen to improve it. They were to consider whether his interference was not calculated to do more harm than good and whether he really acted for the interests of society, and whether the drama depicted and written in that style, tended to bring about a good feeling between the natives and the Europeans. It had been clearly shown in the author's preface that the motive was any thing but to bring about

that feeling, and such being the case and if they believed that the state of society was such, that there was no necessity for a publication of the kind, and that the planters had been dealt with most harshly, they must without any hesitation call the defendant a libeller. There could be no question that the charges of arson and other crimes brought against the planter were to make the world believe that was his real character. All that they required to be satisfied with, was that the defendant was the publisher of the libel and he would prove that beyond all doubt. Possibly it might be suggested by the learned counsel for the defence that when he presented this pamphlet there was no secrecy about its publication. But he was prepared to show that the whole matter was kept a profound secret till the books were sent for. It was the mode of publication which destroyed the force of that argument. If it had not been so conducted it would have been different. By the engine this was propagated there was visible an agent acting under his direction and he might say it was put in force by a most useful part of the Christian community of this country. It had been known that the Indigo Planters have done a great deal to increase the commerce of the country and still they were to be attacked by such a worthless libeller. He had said quite sufficient as to the intention of the libel, its publication was worse than malicious. It did not give the parties an opportunity of rebutting the attack and it had been attempted to be circulated with the greatest possible secrecy. He should not travel back on the same ground Sooner or later by their verdict it would be decided whether the act of the defendant was a constitutional privilege or it had gone far beyond that. It would also be a question whether there was the slightest ground for such an attack. He need not tell them the circumstances under which it was intended to stab these persons in the dark.

The defendant was represented by very able men, who would fight his case thoroughly and set to right any thing he had misrepresented. He did not address them in behalf of any particular class, but he represented the whole European population of Bengal, himself included. Now he should press the case for this reason. Had the name of James Long been put on the publication and openly circulated, the case would have been quite different.

It was with difficulty that it had been ascertained that the Bengal office was the receptacle of this mischievous production and nobody could get a copy of it until it was sent down from a remote part of the country. Was secrecy required for the propagation of truth, to show the people the native feeling and native society. Why not give the parties so grossly attacked a chance to rebut the foul calumnies. Why send of Lahore. Was it fair play to condemn without hearing the defence. The word mischief became synonimous with missionary. Whether the ground of publication was calculated to do a great deal of mischief between the two races he would leave them to judge. They must know the amount of disturbance that had been caused by missionary interference both in Demarara and the Cape.

He was sorry to say that the religious prejudices of many brought religion into contempt. Religion must not be perverted in its term. The right mode of converting the heathen was not by creating an ill will between the convert and the Christian. He would ask them to consider what would be the position of the Europeans in isolated districts if such bad feelings were to be created. Their life hung as it were with a thread.He did not wish to excite or draw down their sympathy; but he simply wished to point out the mischievous acts of the parties. A man might rightly or wrongly give his opinions and comment strongly on the conduct or feelings of any class provided he did not exceed the bounds of legitimate discussion. But were all planters to be denounced as men who were worse than brutes, who did everything that was wrong and that they were hated and despised by their neighbours. He would ask was that the act of a conscientious man whose business it was to inculcate charity, but not to create dissension. They all new that their late Bishop in his sermons spoke of the state of society sometimes in very strong terms, but it was the conduct of a bold man, and there was nothing objectionable in it. That was the act of a kind comforter of religion. Then was a missionary to be allowed to interfere with a staple article of commodity in that way. Christian charity ought to have dictated to him that he was doing wrong. He had represented Messrs. Rose and wood as the great capitalists and their acts of oppression. He would ask them to reflect for a moment how much the conduct of the Reverend gentleman would affect the interests of such a firm as Jardine Skinner and Co., who were the great Indigo capitalists. It might be said that the Reverend gentleman did not adopt the views of the writer of the pamphlet; but he thought so long as he had translated and published them he adopted his views. By showing the world that such a state of things existed in the mofussil he brought very serious charges against a whole body. Had there not been any attempt made before? Could they shut their eyes against the writings of the Revd. Messrs. Sale and Bomswetch and others which have brought about a political conspiracy.

What would be the conduct of a right thinking man? Why, not to attempt to convert the natives by shewing up the wrongs of those whose religion he wished them to follow. If every missionary were to follow such a course, he would not, he was certain, get a single convert. Now why were not the charges brought and proved in a substantive manner instead of being circulated privately and beyond the reach of those who were affected by them. He should be the last person to say anything against the freedom of discussion. The Press had its vices and its abuses. If it exceeded its limit there was the law to protect the parties abused. But who were the black sheep? His clients have complained to vindicate their character and he trusted that by their verdict they would gain their point. They should have no pity for a man who propagated calumnies such as were contained in this libel. A question might be raised of justification. It was impossible that the defendant could justify his acts. Although it might be

said that the acted from information received, that would not justify his acts. He was responsible for every line he had translated; and as regards the question of malice, all he would say was that the proof of the malice was contained in the libel. The avowed object appeared to be to excite the feelings of the natives and to ridicule the planters. That virtue alone was to be found in the native population, that Englishmen were the curses of the country. Were they to believe that the native women became the victims of their lust and good God, were they to believe that their wives prostituted themselves to the officials with a view of gaining power to carry on their atrocities, and were such libellers to go unpunished?–men who would not scruple to bring about a feeling which would drive every Englishman directly or indirectly connected with Indigo out of the country. It would be their duty to return a verdict of guilty and that of the Judge in sentencing, to temper justice with mercy, for which the bench was conspicuous. He could not help repeating what would be the consequence if people were to be allowed to excite the feelings of a race which numbered some thousands to every European residing in isolated districts. Their adversaries would be like the Maharatta horsemen or the Moslem hoarde and would have to fly from the country.

The learned counsel then concluded his speech which lasted for nearly four hours. After which the following witnesses were examined :—

Clement Henry Manuel to Mr. Cowie—I am a printer in Calcutta. My press is the Calcutta Printing and Publishing Press. I printed this pamphlet called the *Nil Darpan*, I received the orders to publish it in April or May last (1861). I received the orders to publish, from the Rev. Mr. Long. He gave me his orders in person. He sent me portions of the copy from time to time. I received directions from him to print 500 copies. I printed that number. I sent these 500 copies toMr. Long's house after they were printed, as it is the general practise. I returned the manuscript with the proofs to Mr. Long, I don't know what was done with the printed copies after they were published. My charge for printing was nearly about 300 rupees. Mr. Long paid the money. My office is at No. 10, Westons' Lane, Calcutta.

Cross-examined by Mr. Eglinton—Mr. Long came to me himself. There was no secrecy about it. I was not pressed by any person to give up Mr. Long's name. I gave his name up at the trial with his consent.

To Mr. Cowie.—I was indicted in the first instance as the publisher. Mr. Long advised my counsel to give up his name, and the name was given up. Before that I was never called upon to give up Mr. Long's name.

To Mr. Eglinton.—I believe the proofs that were passed were in Mr. Long's handwriting.

To Mr. Cowie.—The proof sheets are always sent before they are finally passed to the author for his corrections. I have the proofs with me. These are the proofs.

[The witness here pointed out Mr. Long's corrections on the proofs.]

To Mr. Eglinton.—I am not sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Long's writing. I speak from the opportunities I have had of knowing his writing.

Walter Brett.—I am the Managing Proprietor and the Editor of the *Englishman* paper. I have been Manager for two years and sole Editor since March last when my coadjutor Mr. Saunders left. Before that time I have been the manager and joint editor. I know that for more than two years there has been a great discussion about Indigo, and I have taken a very great part in that discussion. A commission was appointed by Government to enquire into the rights of the native ryots and the position of Indigo Planters in relation thereto. My paper according to the evidence given before that commission, naturally took the view of the Planters. The *Bengal Harkaru* naturally took the same view. The two daily papers mentioned in the *Nil Darpan*, I believe to be the *Englishman* and the *Harkaru*. I first receive a copy of this publication on the 25th or 26th of May. I believe it to be the 27th May. I wont swear positively to that; it was either the 26th or 27th. I can't tell who sent the copy to me. I got it from a peon, it was under cover and addressed to the Editor of the *Englishman*. I had sent for a copy, but before I got that this one reached me. I afterwards received copies of it from several quarters. I can't state the parties from whom I received them. I am not acquainted with Mr. Long's handwriting. From the knowledge I have had of the subject I have no doubt that the papers alluded to are the *Englishman* and the *Harkaru* The *Phoenix* took the other line unnaturally. I may say, I read this publication and I have no doubt that the parties alluded to in it are the editors of the papers I have mentioned.

Cross-examined by Mr. Eglinton.—I am a member of the Landholder's Association. The Association has paid for the prosecution. I heard it asserted, but not upon any authority, that some of the members dissented from the Association to pay for this prosecution. I am not an Indigo-planter. I have nothing whatever to do with it. I can't call myself an Indigo-planter of Lower Bengal. I observed that the *Englishman* and *Harkaru* were constantly styled by the other publications as the two Indigo Journals. There are several daily papers in India, some of those papers advocated the cause of the ryots, but the majority of them advocated the Indigo interest. I said that the *Phœnix* unnaturally took the view of the question the other way. I know nothing of the views of the native papers. If you mean the English native papers, I know that the *Hindoo Patriot* and the *Indian Field* took a view altogether opposed to mine.

Mr. Eglinton.—In these papers are the planters represented as oppressing the natives? What are your inpressions as to the general feelings against the planters?

The Judge.—How are you trying to use that Mr. Eglinton?

Mr. Eglinton.—I want to show the independent public opinion as to the Indigo question.

The Judge.—I have no objection to your putting it, but I could not admit Mr. Brett's impressions.

Mr. Eglinton.—The witness has given his opinion as to his papers and I want to know impressions ás to the line followed by the others.

The Judge.—The learned Council for the prosecution had a perfect right to ask the witness anything regarding his own paper, and unless you produce those papers, you can't ask him any questions upon them.

Mr. Eglinton.—The witness has stated his opinion about the *Harkaru* without its being produced, and I think I have a right to ask what his impressions were as to the others.

The Judge.—But that related to the two papers mentioned in the libellous publication.

After some discussion the question was allowed to be put.

Mr. Eglinton.—Are you not aware as a matter of fact that those papers advocated the cause of the ryots and took an opposite view to that taken by you?

Witness.—As a matter of fact I don't know they have. To the best of my belief they have taken such a view. They exhibited a strong prejudice against the Indigo-planter, whether that prejudice is founded on truth or not the balance goes quite the other way.

Examination continued.—The *Englishman* has a large circulation, that circulation was not decreased by the publication of the libel?

Mr. Eglinton.—I believe your paper is as much respected now as it had been before the publication of the libel.

Witness.—That is a question for outside and not for me to answer (Laughter).

Mr. Eglinton.—Now is it not a fact that since you took up the Indigo question you have had a large increase to your subscription list by Indigo-planters subscribing to your paper.

Witness.—If you speak proportionally, I say no. If you wish me to go into details as to my subscription list I must object to answer that question, unless I am compelled by the court to do so.

The Judge.—I know a similar objection having been raised in England by a newspaper proprietor, who objected to state the num-

ber of a particular class of his subscribers, because he thought it would affect his advertisements.

MR. EGLINTON.—I don't understand Mr. Brett to refuse to answer the question upon that ground.

MR. BRETT.—Before I answer any such questions I shall ask the protection of the Court. I object to answer the number of any particular class on my subscription list.

THE JUDGE.—A newspaper proprietor has as much right to be protected as any merchant who would come into this court and object to disclose his accounts. If it is a question which has an immediate bearing on this case, I should ask the witness to answer it.

MR. NEWMARCH here rose to explain.

THE JUDGE.—Though Mr. Eglinton was quite competent to conduct examination, it was irregular for two gentlemen to address the Court.

MR. EGLINTON said—Mr. Newmarch wished to explain that the question had an immediate bearing on the present case, in as much as the first count of the indictment mentioned that two of the journals had advocated a particular interest for a thousand rupees. The question was put with the view of eliting some information as to whether the witness's paper had not gained by such subscription the amount stated.

THE LEARNED JUDGE thought the question might be put in this shape–whether by the particular views, Mr. Brett had adopted, that did not bring him additional subscribers and whose subscriptions amounted to a thousand rupees.

MR. EGLINTON TO WITNESS.—Since those articles on the Indigo question have appeared, has the number of your subscribers, I mean Indigo-planters, increased or decreased?

WITNESS.—I did not come prepared to answer this question absolutely; but I think it has not increased by one. Perhaps the Court would allow me to explain that there has been a considerable change in the constitution of my paper, and my subscription list has been increasing on a stated average for the last two years.

MR. EGLINTON.—I wish to ask the witness another question. I wish to know whether before the date of libel, Mr. Brett as editor of the Englishman had not received from the Planters in the shape of subscriptions a thousand rupees.

Mr. Cowie objected to the question being put. What was aimed at appeared to be whether before the publication of the libel the witness had, instigated by a hope of gain, advocated a certain view and received that amount of remuneration. Though he did not think even if that question was answered to the affirmative, it could have that bearing.

The Judge said all that the learned counsel for the defence wished to know was, whether Mr. Brett had received such additional subscribers in consequence of his advocacy of the Indigo interest. As he said before, a news-paper proprietor was required to be protected in the same way as a merchant.

Mr. Eglinton contended it was a very proper question and would insist on its being put.

MR. BRETT.—I refuse to answer it, because I consider that as a part of my trading matter.

THE JUDGE.—I shall allow the question to be put, but at the same time I consider it an irregular question.

MR. EGLINTON TO MR. BRETT.—My question is simply this—whether before the publication of this libel your subscription list from the Indigo-planters amounted to a 1,000 rupees a year?

MR. BRETT.—Am I to answer that question?

THE JUDGE.—Please answer it?

MR. BRETT.—Yes.

MR. EGLINTON.—I suppose news-papers all over the world advocated different cases and particular interests?

MR. BRETT.—I should say they did.

THE JUDGE.—It did not require the evidence of Mr. Brett to prove that fact to the jury.

MR. EGLINTON.—I merely put the question, so that my learned friends might not object to my stating so to the jury on the ground that it was not in evidence.

MR. COWIE.—I must ask you one question, Mr. Brett. Did you advocate this case with a view of gaining the 1,000 rupees?

MR. BREET.—Certainly not.

MR. COWIE.—Do you consider this statement in the *Nil Darpan* about taking a bribe of a 1,000 rupees as a charge against you for having advocated the cause of the Planters?

MR. BRETT.—I do.

ALEXANDER FORBES to MR. PETERSON.—I am the present editor of the *Harkaru* and have been so far the last year and a half. I was so in May 1851. I have read the *Nil Darpan*. I see the passage which refers to the editors of the two daily papers. The papers referred to are the *Englishman* and the *Harkaru*. They refer to myself and Mr. Brett. I have no doubt about it. I have rightly or wrongly advocated the case of the Planters.

MR. PETERSON.—Have you like Judas Iscariot taken 30 rupees' and sold the ryot's cause?

MR. FORBES.—I have not (laughter).

THE JUDGE.—I shall take that down, that Mr. Forbes has not like Judas Iscariot done so (Renewed laughter.)

MR. FORBES CONTINUED.—The *Harkaru* and the *Englishman* are the two papers which have advocated the Indigo interest. I have not only been an editor but an Indigo Planter. I have directly been engaged in Indigo-planting and zemindary for 15 years and indirectly for 3 or 4 years. I have not read quite through the publication. I know from what I have read the Planters are attacked as a general body.

MR. PETERSON.—Do the Indigo-planters torture the Ryots?

MR. FORBES.—An Indigo-planter could not manage his business if he struck a single native.

MR. EGLINTON.—Objected to the question. Mr. Peterson had no right to ask it. They had nothing to do with the truth or falsity of the libel.

Mr. Peterson thought he had a right to put the question, as a good deal depended on the truth or falsity of the statements contained in the pamphlet.

Mr. Forbes repeated his answer to the question.

MR. PETERSON.—What is meant by the words that the ryots will be made to drink the waters of the seven factories?

MR. FORBES.—That he was carried from one factory to another and confined there.

MR. PETERSON.—What are the duties of an Ameen?

MR. FORBES.—The duties of a Factory Ameen are to make advances to the ryots and generally superintend the cultivation of Indigo. It is his province to mark the land for cultivation, subject of course to the approval of the planters. In every factory they have an Ameen who has charge of every 200 beegahs.

MR. PETERSON.—What is meant by this passage? "We shall make you eat & c."

MR. FORBES.—It is meant that he will be confined in the godown.

MR. PETERSON.—Again, "we have nearly abandoned all the ploughs still we have to cultivate Indigo."

MR. FORBES.—It means compulsory labour.

MR. PETERSON.—Again, "Just write to the attorney not one of these shall be let out"?

MR. FORBES.—"It is intended by confining them, to compel them to give false evidence."

MR. PETERSON.—There at page 45 between Planter and Gopi—"Saheb, grant pardon for this bad conduct; the Ameen brought his own sister to our younger Saheb's room. What meaning do you attach to that?

Mr. Forbes.—That he brought her there for bad purposes–to have carnal connection.

Mr. Peterson.—I believe you have considerable experience with regard to native customs and manners.

Mr. Forbes.—I have.

Mr. Peterson.—Is the drama a particular mode of representing or expressing the state of Society among the Bengalees?

Mr. Forbes.—It is.

Mr. Peterson.—Is the drama a favourable mode of depicting the several states of native society?

Mr. Forbes.—Yes.

Mr. Peterson.—I believe Dacca is a famous place for the getting up of dramas of this kind, and the people there take a peculiar interest in it.

Mr. Forbes.—Yes they do.

Mr. Judge.—Do these dramas represent fictions as well as truths?

Mr. Forbes.—They are fictions with a great deal of truth in them.

Mr. Peterson.—Would in a native population this drama be believed by the natives as representing the feelings of the natives against Planters.

Mr. Forbes.—Not if they are acquainted with the character and conduct of the planters.

Mr. Peterson.—But I mean in those places where planters not sufficiently known?

Mr. Forbes.—I believe it is so in Calcutta where Europeans are not known.

Mr. Peterson.—Are you acquainted with Mr. Long's hand-writing?

Mr. Forbes.—I am.

Mr. Peterson.—Look at these proof sheets and tell the Court whether the writing on them is Mr. Long's or not?

Mr. Forbes.—I see corrections in various parts. These words "500 copies" are in Mr. Long's writing. Also the correction in page 54 the "Peadah" in substitution for the word "Bailiffs," is his writing. In page 65 the words "to press" are in his hand-writing. The correction in page 20 I am not quite certain of, because it is written more clearly than Mr. Long writes, as to the rest I have no doubt.

Mr. Newmarch.—Since you have joined the *Harkaru* has it not become much stronger?

Mr. Forbes.—I have not read the paper for several years before that, and I could not therefore say whether it is now stronger or not.

MR. NEWMARCH.—It has been most strenuous in its advocacy of the Indigo interest?

MR. FORBES.—I cannot say, but I hope it has been.

MR. NEWMARCH.—You have done so to the utmost of your abilities, and they are I believe not small.

MR. FORBES.—I have.

MR. NEWMARCH.—I suppose you have no objection to tell us if your subscription list has increased by planters subscribing since you took up the Indigo question?

MR. FORBES.—I never looked to the subscription list. All I know is that after I joined a good many subscribed.

MR. NEWMARCH.—No doubt those subscriptions were much larger than 1000 a year?

MR. FORBES.—I have not the least idea.

MR. NEWMARCH.—Are there not a good number of English daily papers in India.

MR. FORBES.—I believe there are six.

MR. NEWMARCH.—Have not some of these papers taken an opposite view of the question from that taken by you?

MR. FORBES.—In Bengal with the exception of one daily paper the others advocated the cause of the planter.

MR. NEWMARCH.—Don't you believe that those who entertained different opinions from you did so conscientiously.

MR. FORBES.—When it arose from ignorance of the subject. I believe there are no conscientious men who know anything about the subject who held a different opinion from myself as to Indigo Planting. There are many conscientious men who believe so, but I don't think they are a large body. I know a great deal of native society. There is a large body of natives who have a strong feeling against the Europeans.

MR. PETERSON.—That being your feeling, do you think the publication of the *Nil Darpan* would bring about a good feeling.

MR. FORBES.—Certainly not. I think the feeling against the Europeans will be greatly increased by it?

MR. PETERSON.—Do you know where the original of the *Nil Darpan* has been published?

MR. FORBES.—I have been told in Dacca.

MR. PETERSON.—Do you know that the drama has been represented there?

MR. FORBES.—Yes I have heard so. I received the information by a letter from Dacca, that drama was presented there.

THE JUDGE.—Beyond giving you any personal annoyance, has the publication of this pamphlet injured your paper in any way?

MR. FORBES.—I don't think it has been injured.

THE JUDGE.—Of course, you can't tell what the effect would be in England.

MR. FORBES.—I can't tell.

MR. WALTER BRETT RECALLED TO MR. COWIE.—The first intimation I received of the publication was by a letter from Lahore, containing an envelope which I produced. It was from the editor of the Lahore Chronicle. I got this 2 days before I wrote to a certain quarter for a copy. It was in consequence of that I asked for official information.

THE JUDGE.—Beynod any personal annoyance you felt, has your paper been injured in any way by the publication of the pamphlet.

MR. BRETT.—From communications I have had I think the publication had a tendency of increasing the prejudice of the native subscribers against the paper.

THOMAS JAMES TO MR. COWIE.—I am the Registrar of the Bengal Secretariat Office. I have been so for the last 4 years and a half. A good number of copies of the *Nil Darpan* was sent to the Bengal office.

MR. COWIE.—Who were they sent by?

MR. EGLINTON.—I object to the question being put, you have a right to ask the witness any question as to what became of the numbers, but you have no right to trace them to the party from whom the witness had received them.

THE JUDGE.—Indeed, I think it is a very legitimate and proper question.

MR. COWIE.—Perhaps my learned friend is apprehensive that we might entrap the witness into making certain admission. But that is not our intention; we want to find out the mode of its publications.

THE JUDGE.—I have the evidence before me that Mr. Long had paid 300 rupees for the printing of 500 copies. Therefore, I don't think that question matters such.

MR. EGLINTON.—I say it is an improper question, because you have no right to trace the publication to the person from whom the witness got it. You have the fact of the copies having come into the possession of the witness.

THE JUDGE.—If Mr. Long parted possession of the books he must stand the consequence of its distribution in the same way as a person who entrusted a publication to a printer. I shall take care that not an atom of evidence which would affect Mr. Long would be taken down by me unless it was legal evidence.

MR. THOMAS JONES RESUMED—These copies were circulated under my frank as Registrar of the Bengal office. No communication was made to me on the subject by the Government. I believe they were sent by the Reverend Mr. Long.

MR. COWIE.—Who gave you instructions for the distribution of the copies?

MR. EGLINTON.—I object to that question. There is no evidence that Mr. Long authorised their distribution or their despatch to Lahore.

MR. COWIE.—That is what we want to find out. Who sent the copies to the Bengal office?

MR. JONES.—Mr. Long I believe.

MR. COWIE.—Why did he send them?

MR. JAMES WITH SOME HESITATION.—For distribution, I presume.

MR. COWIE.—Did he ask you to distribute them?

MR. JAMES.—He did not ask me.

MR. COWIE.—Did he ask anybody else? Why did he send them to you?

MR. JONES.—I can't say if he did.

MR. COWIE.—Did you send many up-country with the frank of the Bengal office?

MR. JONES.—I did.

MR. COWIE.—How did you know to whom they were to be sent.

MR. JONES.—Because the copies were accompanied by a list containing the names of the parties to whome they were to be despatched. I have not the list with me I will send for it.

THE JUDGE.—You said that you received 500 copies.

MR. JAMES.—I have only returned the other day to office, after an absence of a month and my memory is not quite clear as to the exact number. I think it was 500.

TO MR. COWIE.—I received the list after a portion of the copies was distributed. This list was in the handwriting of Mr. Long. I directed them to be sent according to the list. I don't remember when I received the list, I think it was about the early part of May. This is one of the covers under which one of the copies was despatched to Lahore. It bears my frank and is dated the 16 May. The distribution occupied more than 2 or 3 days. Some copies were sent home to England previous to my receiving the list. I don't think any copies were sent to England after my receiving the list. I can't at present, recollect the name of any person to whom they were to be sent.

THE JUDGE.—I want you to explain to the jury why the copies were sent to a Government Department?

MR. JONES.—I can't, my Lord.

THE JUDGE.—Do you know that any communication had been made to the Bengal Office before these papers were sent?

MR. JAMES.—I am not aware of any in the present case.

THE JUDGE.—Why do you draw the distinct.—Were you in the habit of receiving such papers before?

MR. JONES.—I have been in the habit of distributing such papers, but always under the authority of the Secretary.

THE JUDGE.—Are papers received in the office without the knowledge of the Secretary and circulated without his knowledge?

MR. JONES.—Certainly not, my Lord.

THE JUDGE.—Were these papers sent in such a manner as the people would understand that they were circulated and directed from the Bengal Office?

MR. JONES.—They were, my Lord.

THE JUDGE.—Was there anything in the envelope to show or to make any person suppose that the papers were not sent by the Government.

MR. JONES.—None my Lord.

THE JUDGE.—I wish to know whether the course adopted in the Bengal office in this case as to the circulation of the papers had ever been followed before?

MR. JONES.—I have frequently circulated native publications indicating native feeling and education and improvement?

THE JUDGE.—Have you read this publication?

MR. JONES.—I have not read half a page of it, my Lord.

THE JUDGE.—Have you been in Court the whole day, and have you heard the passages read by the learned Counsel for the prosecution?

MR. JONES.—I have, my Lord—For the first time this day, I know its contents.

THE JUDGE.—Have you seen similar productions as this before?

MR. JONES.—Within the range of my recollection, I don't believe I have seen a similar one.

WILLIAM FREDERICK FERGUSSON.—I am at present Secretary to the Landholders' Association. The present prosecution has been instituted by the Association.

Mr. Tom Jones recalled.

THE JUDGE.—Do you think the publication is illustrative of the

manner and progress of the native mind, and that as an advancement in their style of writing, the Government were anxious to circulate it?

MR. JONES.—I can't say, my Lord.

MR. FERGUSSON'S EXAMINATION CONTINUED.—The action was instituted by the unanimous resolution of the Association. It comprises of Indigo-planters and others not connected with Indigo-planting. I have persused the publication and have no doubt as to its application. The effect would be to creat a bad feeling between the ryots and the planters.

TO MR. EGLINTON.—I don't say that many of ryots would be able to read the English translation. Those who could read Shakespere might be able to read it (a laughter). I am not aware that a single member was adverse to the proposition to institute the present action. There was one gentleman who seemed against it, but he was not exactly opposed to it. He said why should they attack inferior tools when they can look at higher game. There was a discussion as to which of the parties should be prosecuted.

SIMON DE CRUZ.—I am employed in the Bengal Office. I have just enquired for the list and have been told that it is not in the office. I searched for it, but could not find it, I saw the list before. It was in my possession. I don't know whether it was in Mr. Long's handwriting. I gave it to native about a fortnight ago. He told me that Mr. Jones wanted it.

MR. JONES RECALLED.—I have been away from the office a month. I saw the list at the time of the distribution. It was filed among the other office papers. I gave it to a person who was in charge of all such papers. I don't remember sending for it before I left the office about a month ago.

THE JUDGE.—Unless it is destroyed it would be there. It could only be removed by the order of the Secretary?

MR. JONES.—Yes, my Lord.

Mr. Cowie asked DeCruz the name of the native to whom he gave the list. DeCruz replied the man's name was Gopal Chandra Mukerjee.

MR. COWIE.—Enquired of he could be sent for; Decruz said it was then after 5 and he must have gone home.

MR. COWIE.—Hoped Decruz would bring him with him to-morrow.

MR. PETERSON.—Said he had no further witnesses to call, except the native whom he would wish to examine about the list and as it was then past 5 o'clock it was impossible that the case could be concluded, the Court had better adjourned.

The Court then adjourned till Saturday the 20th instant.

Second day–July 20th, 1861.

Mr. Cowie enquired if the native Gopal Chandra Mukerjee was in court. He was told that Mr. Lushington had come with the list.

E. LUSHINGTON, (Examined by Mr. Cowie.)—I produce a list containing a number of names. There is nothing in the list to show that it in any way related to the *Nil Darpan*. When I took charge of the Bengal office I was told about this list. I don't know the handwriting on this slip paper which is attached to the list. The list itself is in the handwriting of a clerk. I kept the list in my drawer. I don't know if Mr. Long saw it. I don't know where this small slip came from. This distribution took place before I joined the Bengal office. The list had been out of my possession for a short time. Mr. Seton Karr had borrowed it and sent it back. I can't say who sent the copies to the Bengal office.

Mr. Cowie enquired if Mr. Forbes was in court to prove the handwriting of Mr. Long on the small slip, when Mr. Eglinton said he admitted the writing to be that of Mr. Long.

CROSS EXAMINED BY MR. EGLINTON.—I have a great number of copies in my possession upwards of 200. I found them in the office.

TO THE JUDGE.—I believe it was in consequence of this prosecution the distribution had been stopped.

THE JUDGE.—Mr. Lushington, just cast your eye on that list. It was stated, yesterday by Mr. Jones, that the Bengal office had been in the habit of circulating translation with a view of showing the style of native composition, and the manners and customs of the people, could you tell me whether such publications in ordinary cases, would be sent to the parties mentioned in that list.*

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* The following are the lists put in the court as Exhibits C & C_1.

No. 1. Mr. Long's distribution
List.

Secretaries of Aborigines Protection Society.
Secretary Peace Society, New Broad Street.
Earl of Albemarle.
Revd. W. Arthur, (Wesleyen. Mission House).
E. B. Underhill, Secretary Baptist Missionary Society.
J. Bright, Esq., M. P.
R. Cobden, Esq., M. P.
Marquis of Clanricarde.
R. H. B. D'Israeli.
D. Forbes, Professor K. C.
E. Gladstone.
Hon. A. Kinnaird, 35, Hyde Park.
Respective Members, Council of India.
J. C. Marshman.
Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel.
D. Masson, 16 Regent Villas, Avenue Road.
Digby Seymour, M. P.
Secretary, Social Science, Pall Mall.
Earl of Shaftesbury.
A. Dunlop, M. P.
Lord Blandford.
C. Buxton.
J. Muri Esq., 16 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh.
Rev. H. Penn, 11 Highbury Crescent.
Secretary, Branch Education Society.
J. Dickenson, Secretary of India Refrom Association.
Lord Stanley, M. P.
J. Horsman, M. P.
J. Layard, M. P.
Sir S. M. Peto, M. P.

Mr. Lushington.—I should say not. (To Mr. Eglinton.) Books and pamphlets are constantly being distributed at the Bengal Office.

This closed the case for the prosecution.

Mr. Eglinton then addressed the jury as follows :—

Gentlemen, in this case I appear for the defendant Mr. Long and however I may differ from the observations of my friend Mr. Peterson in opening this case, I do agree with him in this that the case we are now trying is one of extreme importance, whether as regards the defendant, or as regards the interests of the public, and the free discussion of questions of general interests. Gentlemen, under these circumstances, I confess that it is with feelings of very considerable anxiety that I rise to address you, not from any feeling of weakness or distrust in respect of the interest which I represent, but lest, I should not place before you the various points which may be urged, on behalf of the defendant so fully and powerfully, as others of my learned friends might have done. Gentlemen, I wish to tell you that it is upon you I altogether rely in this case. It is to your firmness and impartiality that I confide the interests of the defendant in this prosecution; and I am convinced that whatever may be the private feelings or partialities of any, amongst you, that you will try the important issue confided to you upon the evisence alone. Gentlemen in

Church Mission Society.
Revd. John Sale.
Revd. A. Schurr.

No. 2. –Bengal Office List.

Secretary of State, 20, Copies.
Earl of Ellenborough.
Earl de Grey and Ripon.
Viscount Raynham.
Hon. J. Waldgrave.
Roundell Palmer.
Col. Sykes.
Sir Culling Eardly.
C. Newdegate.
Sir James Colvile.
J. W. Dalrymple
H. Ricketts.
Hodgson Pratt.
J. W. Kaye.
J. F. Hawkins.
J. Dickenson, Jt. Secy. to the Indian Reform Society.
M. Townsend.
Sir Erskine Perry.
D. Vansittart, Esq.
J. G. Craig, Esq.
Lord Auckland.
Sir C. Trevelyan.
J. G. Phillimore, M. P.
H. D. Seymour Esq. M. P.
R. W. Crawford, M. P.
Lord Cranworth.
Dr. Lushington.
Sir J. Herschel.
Sir Walpen, Esq.
Sir J. Packington.
Sir A. Buller.
H. M..Parker.
Sir S. Fergusson.
Sri Lawrence Peel.

English Editors.

Daily News.
Economist.
Saturday Review.

Indian Editors.

Bombay Times.
Lahore Chronicle.
Madras Spectator.
Moffussilite

cases of this kind which has been over and over again canvassed in private society and in the public prints, it is impossible, that some of you, at least should not have come into that box, with minds tending to place confidence in the views of the prosecution or in those of the defendant. If that be so I tell you, and I am sure the learned Judge will tell you, that you are to dismiss any such tendencies from your mind and that it is your duty, in considering your verdict, on the issue of libel or no libel, to consider only such evidence as may be produced in this Court. Gentlemen, before going into the merits of this case, it may perhaps be expected that I should make some allusion to the defendant. Mr. Long has, I believe, been known for many years as a gentleman who has taken a great interest in the welfare and advancement of native interests. His reputation and character as a clergyman and a gentleman, have been impeached, and upon this point it will perhaps be sufficient, if I state to you that upon the Grand Jury finding a true bill upon this indictment, he at once found bail in two gentlemen whose own positions and characters are a sufficient guarantee, that they would not lend themselves to aid any unworthy object. I mean the *Revd. Mr. Hutton,* the senior Chaplain of Calcutta, and *Mr. Stewart,* also a clergyman, and I believe the Secretary to the Church Missionary Society. I think, therefore Mr. Long appears before you as a gentleman most unlikely to be guilty of the charges contained in this indictment, and a gentleman entirely undeserving of the harsh and severe remarks which, *Mr. Peterson* in his opening, thought it his duty to make upon him, and which I protest against as alike ungenerous and unfounded. I shall now proceed to consider the case itself, but before touching upon the substantial question raised by this indictment, I beg to call your attention to the procedure adopted by this prosecution, in placing this charge before you; because I think that Mr. Long has a strong claim upon your sympathy in respect of that procedure–the harshest known to English Law. Gentlemen if the parties who instituted this prosecution, I mean the Landholders' Association, felt themselves aggrieved by this pamphlet, they had three courses open to them. They or one of them might (notwithstanding, as I contend, *Mr. Peterson's* observations in opening) have proceeded by civil action, and in that case Mr. Long might have justified in respect of the matter contained in this pamphlet. I do not say, he would have done so to the extent of upholding on his own behalf, all the matter contained in the pamphlet, because as has already been stated publicly, Mr. Long is far from identifying himself with much of the matter pamphlet contains. But at last, his mouth would not have been altogether shut, as it now is. Or if, the parties prosecuting, had desired a fair investigation of this matter, they might have proceeded by criminal information, in which form of procedure the defendant would also have had an opportunity of defending himself, and his views, verbally and by affidavit, and before being dragged before a jury, as he has been, the Judge of this Court must have pronounced the case, as one fitting to be brought before a jury. But gentlemen, these courses seem to have been considered too open, too

manly for the purpose of this prosecution, and we find ourselves trying an indictment, under a form of proceeding, which absolutely shuts out the defendant, from going into any evidence whatever as to what grounds he may have had, for the publication of this alleged libel. But you may say, that this is the English Law. If you do say so, I say it is not the English Law, as now administered in Westminister Hall. So harsh, so oppressive was that state of the Law considered, that some sixteen or seventeen years ago, the Legislature passed an Act, empowering the defendant in an idictment for libel, to give in evidence as a defence to the indictment, such matter in justification of the libel in point of fact, as he might be advised. (The learned counsel here read a judgment of Lord Campbell, expressing his opinion of the unsatisfactory nature of the old Law.) That Act, so passed in England has, however, never been extended to this country, and we now find ourselves in this position, that however true in point of fact libellous matter may be, the party publishing it, is altogether barred from giving any evidence whatever upon the point. I think therefore, that Mr. Long has the strongest reason to complain of, the harsh, and I had almost said, vidictive courses of procedure, this prosecution has pursued, and I bring that course to your notice not only as entitling Mr. Long to your sympathy, but remembering the state of Law, as a reason why you should be doubly anxious not to affix upon him a verdict of guilty, without the most anxious and careful consideration. I shall now proceed to make some observations upon Mr. Peterson's opening in this case and here I may say, that I have not the slightest intention of following Mr. Peterson in a number of the topics he thought it his duty to discuss; for instance the relations between the planter and the ryot, the merits or demerits of the advance system, or the position of the Government of this country, are topics, quite foreign to the issue you have to try. Certainly, If I had imagined otherwise, if I had thought an acquaintance with the mofussil or with the Indigo system, essential to the proper conduct of this defence, I should have declined to undertake it altogether. With the truth or falsity of the matter contained in this alleged libel, you have nothing at all to do, and in considering your verdict have no right to look, beyond, the four corners of the book itself. The great fallacy which I think pervaded Mr. Peterson's speech, was this that he assumed that this publication was in the native character. If it had been, then it might have been open to him to enlarge upon the dangers, which might result in respect of the native population amongst which it circulated. But this book is not in Bengalee, it is in English, and it is folly to say it will even have any circulation at all amongst the ryots or any other native class whatever. But it is said that the book is not only a libel on the planters but on the Government, the Civil Service, the whole body of Europeans in this country. Gentlemen, I do not know how that may be, but when Mr. Peterson talked about the Government, not having presented an indictment of its own, I felt that perhaps the reason might be, that in fact the alleged libel was not as I hope, you also will think, any libel at all. Again Mr. Peterson alluded, in strong terms of Mr. Long's not coming

forward in the first instance and annoncing himself as the publisher of this drama, I do not know why he should have done so. It is not correct to say that Mr. Long has endeavoured to maintain, an anonymous position with reference to this publication. Mr. Manuel stated in his evidence yesterday, that he had never been pressed to give up the name of the person who furnished him with the manuscript, and I can say from my own knowledge of the fact, that both before and on the occation of *Mr. Manuel's* trials at the last session's Mr. Long not merely authorized his name being given up, but was most anxious that it should be given up. I shall not stop to enlarge upon this part of the case further, but before calling your attention to the indictment itself, I hope it will not be considered presumptuous if I touch for a moment upon what your duty in this trial is, as it is necessary for the purposes of my argument that I should do so. It is your duty to say whether this alleged libel has ever been published by the defendant as alleged in the indictment. I should hardly dispute after the evidence we have had that there has been a legal publication by Mr. Long. However, as to the extent of that publication, I differ entirely from *Mr. Peterson,* who opened in a somewhat mysterious manner not supported by the evidence as if there had been a systematic and continued circulation amongst the native community. What is the fact? On the evidence it appeared that only some fourteen copies have been distributed in India, being that part of the list in the defendant's handwriting, and I apprehend he is only responsible for so much of the list as is written by him. I do not mean to say that the legal publication of even one copy would not be sufficient to support this indictment, and I only allude to this part of the subject at all to show that this case has been presented to you as to most of its material features, in an exaggerated form not supported by the evidence afterwards produced. Then gentlemen, it is for you and you alone to say, whether the innuendoes set out in this indictment are capable of bearing the construction the prosecution would place upon them, that is, whether this drama was published in the sense assigned to it by the prosecution. You are not to take the construction of *Mr. Peterson* as to the meaning of the various passages of the drama relied on by the prosecution, neither are you to take the construction of the learned judge or my own construction, but you are to look at the publication itself and as men of sense and understanding, to say upon the whole case, whether it is capable of bearing the constructions attributed to it by *Mr. Peterson.* I submit that when looked at impartially it nowhere can be said to support the innuendoes set out in the indictment and I shall enter more on that point later. Thirdly, gentlemen it is for you and you alone to say and this perhaps is the most important part of your duty whether this publication was published maliciously and wrongfully in the sense charged in the indictment, and generally it is left in your discretion to decide whether this drama is a libel such as to justify you in returning a verdict of guilty. Formerly it was only the duty of the jury in such a case as this, to find whether the publication and the innuendoes were proved. The question of libel or no libel was left to the Judge.

But in England about the end of the last century when political feeling ran high and indictments of this sort for political offences were common, it was felt by the Legislature, that this state of the law, left an unconstitutional power in the Judge, and the Act, known as Fox's Act was passed which gave to juries the power of determining the question of libel or no libel and to the Judge only the option if he pleased, of expressing his opinion on the question. That is the law which obtains in this court to-day, and I wish fully to know that you are bound to form your opinion upon this indictment, from the publication itself, and irrespective of anything which you may hear in this court from any other source. I will now turn to the indictment itself. The first count charges a libel against *Mr. Breet* the Editor of the *Englishman* newspaper. now it is not my intention to cast any reflections upon *Mr. Brett* or the newspaper he edits. *Mr. Brett* is a gentleman whose integrity and character I have never heard disputed, and it is not open to me, even if it were necessary for the purpose of this defence, to comment upon any of this matter which has appeared in his paper. But I will say that if anybody of men ought to be chary of coming into court, to prosecute indictments for libels, it is the managers and proprietors of the Indian Press. For this is beyond dispute, that nowhere has personally invective and strong language been more continuously resorted to, than by the public journals of India. This is a matter of every day experience. It is what you must know well, and I think therefore that *Mr. Brett* or any other editor of a newspaper in this count, ought to exercise the utmost forbearance in matters of this kind. At the same time *Mr. Brett* if he thinks, he or his paper is libelled, has a right to come into this court and ask for redress. The question in this case is, has *Mr. Brett* been libelled. Does the matter in the first count amount to a libel? I deny it, and I hope to convince you that *Mr. Peterson's* interpretation of the passage relied on is altogether erroneous. I submit that, that is no libel. What does it impute. In effect it imputes nothing more than this that the Editors of the two newspapers in question wrote professionally and for money in support of a particular interest. Is that a libellous imputation? If it is, then it is an imputation of doing that which is done in every civilized country in Europe. What is more common than in England to find particular journals, particular pamphlets, particular magazines devoted to the writing up of particular interests. Every political party in England has its own exponent of its own views. The Church, the Bar, the Army, the Navy, the Commerce, each has its own paper devoted to the advancement of its own particular interest, and I say that the imputation conveyed in the first part of libel relied on in the first count, is an imputation of nothing but what is done everyday where newspapers and other printed publications exist. Then as to the remainder of the alleged libel against *Mr. Brett,* I do not know whether the imputation of the prosecution is that, that passage conveys a comparison with Judas Iscariot. If so I say that such imputation is altogether unfounded, and if you read this passage with ordinary attention you will see that it is *illustration* and not comparison, which is aimed at. Gentlemen, it is for you to draw your

own conclusions from the passage. I cannot do more than press my own views upon you, but I may say that I do believe that upon reading it carefully and finding for yourselves, you will find that the construction I put upon it, is quite consistent with the language used by the writer of the pamphlet. Now gentlemen as to the second count. In that count it is stated that the defendant published the matter therein set out, being nearly the whole of this drama, with the malicious intent, and with the object, therein set out. It is stated to be a libel on the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal. Why the planters of Lower Bengal, only should consider themselves peculiarly aggrieved, I know not. There is nothing to tie the publication to them personally. But gentlemen, do you believe that they or any one of them really care one pice about the publication? For my part I do not. I see many of them here to-day, and I saw many here yesterday, and certainly I must say, judging from their demeanour and general manner, I never saw men who seemed to me to be further from labouring under the idea of unmerited invective, or who considered it due to themselves, to come to a Court of Justice, and ask for the sympathy of their countrymen through the interesting medium of a special jury. To what then are we to attribute this prosecution? Of that, gentlemen, it is for you to judge.But this I will say that coming before you as it does. you will consider anxiously, before, you by your verdict, sympathize with any thing but what the strict justice of the case requires. If the planting interest really desired to proceed against the guilty parties, assuming there has been ill feeling created or increased by the publication amongst the natives, why did they not, long ago proceed against some publisher of the native edition? That edition, if any, would be the one of which they have reason to complain, and not the one before you as to the publication of which I have already adverted. Now gentlemen, I say there are four grounds upon which I contend you are bound to return a verdict of acquittal on this indictment. First, I say that the indigo-planters of Lower Bengal are an undefined body who cannot present an indictment for a libel upon themselves, regard being had to all legal authority upon the subject. Secondly, I say that this is in fact a dramatic fiction in respect of which no jury would return a verdict of guilty. Thirdly, I say that the matter charged, regard being had to the evidence, is not libellous. And fourthly, say that that there is no evidence at all that this drama was published maliciously, or that it goes beyond the limit allowed for the discussion of topics of public interest. As to the first point, I find no authority for the position that an indictment for libel would lie at the suit of a body like the planters of Lower Bengal. I admit that a libel does lie at the suit of a body of men, and that it is not necessary that any one person should be alluded to in particular. But the authorities which establish that point, some of which as *R. vs. William*, *R. vs. Osborne*, and the like, do not support the position that such a prosecution as the present, at the suit of a body, so undefined as the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal, can be supported. The learned counsel cited the cases referred to. In these cases the clergy of the

Diocese of Durham, and certain Portugues Jews residing near a certain street in London were libelled, and it was held that a criminal information lay—but there was a unity and an identity about those bodies of persons which does not exist in the present case. The Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal have no indentity or connection one with the other. They have no corporate existence. One planter lives at one place, one, at another, twenty miles off, a third, a perfect stranger to the others, perhaps fifty miles further off, and I say that under such a state of thinks you will be carrying the law of libel far further, than it has ever yet been carried, if you lay it down, by your verdict, that such a body can support an indictment in respect of a libel upon themselves collectively. The imputation, if any, is upon an occupation. Wo ld an indictment lie at the suit for instance of the Policy-holders of Bengal, of the Lawyers of Bengal, of the Ryots of Bengal, of the Slave-holders of any of the Southern States of America? I submit that no such body would ever think of presenting an indictment such as this, or if it were presented, I believe no jury would listen to it. If any individual member of any of these bodies is personally aggrieved by some libellous publication, let him take proceedings and get justice, but I submit to you that no body of men such as the planters of Bengal, possessing no identity, no corporate existence, can institute such an indictment as the one before you, and that if any of them be personally aggrieved, they must come into court and indict in the usual way. Again, gentlemen, in all the cases referred to, the parties complaining were charged with the committal of some specified actual offence—here the whole imputation is conveyed in the fiction of the drama which of itself would make the case relied on, not applicable. Then, secondly, I say that this is a drama (a fiction with a good deal of truth in it, was Mr. Forbes' deposition of a drama) and that therefore no jury would lay it down as a libel. Every play, every work of fiction has an evil genius as part of the *dramatis personae.* Sometimes that evil genius is a lawyer, sometimes a physician, sometimes a priest, and sometimes even a women. But because a writer chooses to present to the world in some one character, the concentrated vice and malignity of a hundred different individuals, is it to be tolerated that one person is to be seized upon by the class he belongs to, as an intended representative of that class? Because the character of Legree in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's work is the concentrated essence of the worst aspect of slavery, are all slaveholders necessarily Legrees? In the drama before you, Wood and Rose are the Legrees of the work, and is it to be said because they are the characters, the author makes them. that all planters are like them, or that any such intention can be extracted from the drama itself? If this principle is to be established, there are many of the standard fictions of the present day nothing but libels. In these times it is the common custom to call attention to systems or practices requiring reform. You know how "Oliver Twist" was written to expose the work house system; how Yorkshire schools were written down in Nicholas Nickleby, and especially how the whole institution of slavery,

political and social, was treated by Mrs. Beecher Stowe. Now I am far from comparing Indigo-planting with any of these evils, but this I do say, that each of the bodies I have referred to might, if they choose, have instituted proceedings in respect of the writings, in question, yet there never has been a hint of anything of the kind; and why not? Because it would be against the spirit of the times to forbid such discussion, and juries would no doubt lay it down that such discussion was proper and within that length to which the freedom of the press has long since happily advanced. In the publication before you, the characters of Wood and Rose are as bad as can be, and if any such imputation exists, I do not believe that the imputations contained in that drama against the conduct of our countrymen are founded on fact. But I do not find any such imputation against the body of the planters. Mr. Peterson admitted, that as in all other bodies, there were planters whose character and conduct would not bear very severe inspection. I say that in Wood and Rose you have a type of those men, as in Legree you have a type of the worst aspect of slavery, and it is utterly wrong to say that because they form part of the personages of the drama, that they represent an entire class. As to the other imputations I give a like answer. When the imputation is against the Indigo-planting interest generally, I say it is too vague; and where individual characters or vicious nature are depicted, then I say, the body cannot complain, because those characters do not and are not intended to represent the body. If any among the planting interest, can fit the character in Rose and Wood to himself or say it was intended for himself let him come forward and indict upon it. (The learned counsel then proceeded to read and comment upon various passages in the drama, contending that they did not bear the construction imputed to them, and that some of them had a direct tendency to present, the Indigo-planting interest in a favourable light). As to third point I contend that this publication is not a libel, and much of what I have already said is applicable to that position, I will not therefore repeat myself. These are not times when the freedom of the press or the discussion of public matters is to be at all restrained. The learned Judge will probably lay down to you precisely, what the state of the law upon that point is, but this is well known, that malice apart, the greatest latitude is allowed in the discussion of public questions, and that in fact upon topics of general interest, a warmth and freedom are tolerated, which would not perhaps be submitted to in the case of a single person. Then was this drama published by the defendant maliciously? The whole facts of the case are against any such view. Mr. Long has never identified himself with the truth of the matter set out in this drama. He has altogether disclaimed anything of the kind. He is not the author, neither was he the translator of the work. Those persons are both known, and if necessary they are ready at a fitting time, to come forward and declare their shares in the matter. But from the beginning to the end of this case, there has been nothing shewn, nor even attempted to be shewn, that Mr. Long acted maliciously. There is no evidence of any hostility on his part to the planting

interest, or that he ever received any cause of private quarrel from that interest. What motive could he have in publishing this libel; if libel it be, but the motives which he has himself already publicly declared, and which are utterly opposed to any idea of malice. The work was not published by Mr. Long as true. He did not and does not believe the imputation therein contained, to be true, but he says that there are exceptional cases in every body of men, and that this drama embodies those exceptional cases, the native interest, in the present unhappy state of affairs, recurring rather to them, than to the brighter side of the picture. Gentlemen, I now leave this case in your hands. It is unnecessary that I should for the purposes of your verdict, discuss further the evidence for the prosecution. I believe you will judge for yourselves as to the defendant's motives, and as to other questions before you. If you find this work a libel, and the defendant guilty, then say that you will carry the Law of Libel further than it has ever yet been carried, and will strike a serious blow at the freedom of discussion of public questions in this country. I hope and anticipate, however, that you will see your way to a verdict which whilst satisfactory to the public and to yourselves, will have the effect of acquitting the defendant upon the charges preferred against him in this indictment.

His Lordship then addressed the jury as follows :—

Gentlemen of the jury, the case in behalf of the defence being closed, you are called upon to determine your verdict, which is as important as it is painful. I never felt a deeper anxiety than I feel now in the discharge of my duties, because there is a question involved in this case which has not been raised by either the learned counsel for the prosecution or the defence. There is a great constitutional question which I beseech you to look anxiously and seriously, and whatever may be the opinions of those who are capable of forming a judgement, it is a matter for your careful consideration. I told now that there was a point involved which was for the interest of society, and I will tell you that it is neither more nor less than the great constitutional principle, namely, the freedom of the press and perfect free descussion. Not one single word would be uttered by me, that would not have proceeded from one of the Judges of England upon that important question, because it is the first time that this question has ever been submitted to a jury in India, and perhaps this is the first time you have been invited in the Supreme Court of India to determine a case of this nature. As jury, composed of men of position and intelligence, I ask you in dealing with this case, not only to look at the history of England but of India. Important as it is to the respectable body of men, who have been unjustly and seriously slandered in their occupation as Indigo-planters, important as the question is to the gentleman who is the defendant, in this case, that question is of far greater importance, because it concerns every human being on the face of the globe, because it is a question which interferes with the free discussion and the liberty of the press.And it would indeed be monstrous, and I say that emphatically, if that great constitutional principle which springs

rom Westminister Hall, were to be thrown aside by one of the Queen's Judges of this court, and I am sure of this. From the observations I am about to address to you, and they are not of my mind, but that of abler men than myself, you will see what a large and important question you will have to try on the present occasion.

In this indictment there are two counts. I will first deal with the first count and on its own merits alone, and will leave you to consider these observations and to exercise your own independent judgement upon them. Having dismissed that, I will come to the all important question as how you intend to deal with the second count in the indictment.

The first count in the indictment is deserving of your most careful attention, and I cannot agree with the observations of the learned counsel for the defence, who appeared to have dismissed, in rather an abrupt manner, the question involved in this. Because how far it may be politic, how far it may be wise on the part of those who filled the responsible position of conducting journals of this large city, to come into court, is not for me to give an opinion upon, the question of libel or no libel is not the question you have to determine, nor have I a right to address you upon it—that is beyond my province and beyond yours. You have to consider and treat the position of an editor, precisely in the same way as you would any ordinary individual. Although the proprietor of a journal has very great power and influence in giving expression to the views he might entertain, every individual, has as much right as, he has, to discuss a question, and therefore if the editor or proprietor is maligned, he has a perfect right to come into a Court of Justice, and asks justice to be done in the same way, as a merchant or any other man engaged in any profession. I will tell you, gentlemen, but I shall not give an opinion as to how far it is politic or wise for those, who should place themselves in the foremost ranks, to stand up for the liberty of the press and the perfect freedom of discussion, to come into this court and seek for redress; that will be a matter for them to consider, and the only question for you to determine will be, whether or not, a libel had been written and published, reflecting injuriously on the parties complaining. Now let me tell you and there is no use of disguising it from you, the first court stands on totally a different footing;—I must say and I have good grounds for saying so, and that the mode in which the present indictment had been presented, does not meet with my approbation. I object to a personal wrong or injury being mixed up with a large amount of public injury, and I do think that if the gentlemen felt themselves aggrieved, their course was not to prefer a criminal charge, but to have brought a civil action, and to have the question as to the amount of injury fully gone into. But at the same time Mr. Brett preferred not to put damage into his own pocket. He wanted to vindicate his character, because a public wrong had been done, and his character had been assailed, and had a perfect right to do so.

The first count in the indictment is confined entirely to a libel or

supposed libel, and that is the question you have to deal with. It is one, reflecting on the characters of two of the leading journals published in this city. Don't think, gentlemen, that I want for a moment to influence your minds I merely mention two of the journals, to express myself in an intelligible manner, for you will be the judges to say whether the preface points to the two papers or not. Now let us see what the first count charges.

[His Lordship here read a portion of the first count.]

I am exceedingly obliged to Mr. Peterson, for going through the several passages relied on, and he has certainly saved me and you, a good deal of trouble. He had pointed out the extracts in a manner which has been most useful to me. In support of that I will read to you the introduction, and I will have a word to say, when we come to the case put by Mr. Eglinton of libelling a class of persons, in contradistinction to, a single individual. But at present the only point is that of the book relied upon by mr. Peterson. First as to the author's preface, and I need not trouble you with any observations on the first part of it, but I will go to the conclusion.

[His Lordship here read a portion of the preface, commencing with the words "The editors of two daily newspapers"]

Now first of all, you must say whether in your opinion, the preface does refer to the Editors of *Englishman* and *Harkarru*, that is the double issue. Now let us see how the evidence bears that out. Mr. Brett is called and he says :—"I am now the editor and managing proprietor of the *Englishman*, I was an assistant editor before, but since Mr. Saunders left I am now the sole editor," and the reason he gives is this—"I believe that in consequence of certain views I have expressed in favour of the Indigo-planters the pamphlet insinuates "that I have been bribed to advocate their cause." And then he says "We have taken a strong view which I consider a natural view of the unhappy disturbances which had arisen between the Indigo-planters and the Ryots." Now looking at all those questions not in a quibbling manner, but as men of the world endowed with common sense you have to say whether the two papers pointed are the *Harkarru* and *Englishman*. There may be grave questions here as to identity, for your consideration. but I do ask you to use your common sense and to say whether those are the papers alluded to or not. The learned counsel Eglinton has said there are other papers published in Bombay and Madras. But what does that prove? Does it prove that the editors of the two papers are not meant? Do the papers of Bombay and Madras interest themselves in Indigo matters? I think they have quite enough to write about their own Presidencies. I therefore do say, gentlemen, I would be trifling with your understanding, if I were to ask you to consider which of those papers were alluded to. Supposing your answer to be in the affirmative, then comes the more important question, whether the language used against the two papers amount to a libel? The first point and upon which Mr. Peterson has so fully gone into, is whether the words,—"What a suprising power

silver has & c." is not libellous. What does that mean. Does it not mean that the editors have taken a thousand rupees to advocate the planters' interests? I do put this most anxiously to you, because you have to judge of the integrity, the power of a news-paper editors, and the important duties he has to discharge in conducting his paper just in the same way as any other persons engaged in other pursuits. Does it not appear, that in being attracted by filthy lucre, that he was not expressing his opinions fairly and honestly in respect of a certain class of people. It was nothing more or less than that he had been bribed. The respectability and character of the press is as important as any other institution. Don't think that in the observations I am now making, that I am doing a gross injustice to others, and that I did so, because I cared for the press or that I am influenced by the press on such thing. I must do justice to every man; no matter what his character or position in society may be. The preface goes on :—"The detestable Judas gave the great preacher of the Christian religion &c. &c." Does that mean that they are willing to sell their best interests of society, which would be gain to them, for money. If it means that, then it is the grossest libel which could be uttered. Yet I have a right and a constitutional right to say so, and which England recognized. I don't wish to give my opinion as its being libel or no libel. If those gentlemen who had been exposed in the print, were private gentlemen, bankers, or gentlemen of any other avocations, and such charges as stated in the book were imputed to them, would they not resent it in the same way? Would he be willing to lay himself open to this frightful charge, that he would be able to write down his neighbour? Apply the principle in that way, and take this book in your hands and say whether it is a libel or no libel. A libel, gentlemen, is this. Anything written against a person, so as to degrade and ridicule him, in his status in society. And I think the point of its being sent up country, by the principal which form a particular charge, it is unnecessary for me to trouble you with. That is the question, gentlemen, you have to determine. With reference to that part of the case, it does not matter, whether the injury is great or slight, because you can't in this case tell the amount of injury. All you have to consider is, whether the publication reflected on the character of Mr. Brett as the editor and proprietor of the *Englishman*.

I thought it right to separate the first count, because Mr. Peterson has dealt with it in that way. And now we have to consider the important question. However important it may be to Mr. Brett and however important it may be to the defendant, there is a question far beyond that in importance, namely the injury to society. But before you give your verdict in this case, I solemnly beseech you that every one of you would realise the importance of this question, I trust every one of you would employ your intelligence and what is stronger your experience, earnestly to consider this question; lest by having regard to individuals, you would wrong society. What is the second count? It is a count framed on this book which I hold in my hand, and it is alleged that it is a libel, reflecting a body of gentlemen, called the

Landholders and British Indian Association, the members of which are Indigo-planters. The learned counsel for the defence says that this is no libel. It may be reflection on a class. It is contrary to law libelling a class. Gentlemen, you will differ from his opinion, when I will call your attention to an authority cited on that point, and it will be for you to say, whether beyond all doubt, an indictment could be preferred in that form, and that authority is fully recognised by Parliament. Some of the leading authorities—a few of them have been cited by Mr. Peterson, are these. The *king vs. Osborne* which is followed by the case. *King vs. Berners* and then the case of *King vs. Williams* and the more recent case is that of *King vs. Evans*. In all these cases it was held that an indictment can be preferred by a class and in the case of the *King vs.* (—?) page 486, the same principle was laid down. In that case, and I think I am not straining the case when I say, that there are not two opinions that according to the authorities, I have quoted, such an indictment can be mentioned. I won't city any more authorities as it would only be embarrassing you, I can only say, that all authorities maintain the principle laid down, that no matter the libel is against an individual or class, it can be framed in the same manner as was the present prosecution. Some question arose whether the language used or written, amounted to a reflection on that class, and tending to breach of the peace, which is the foundation of the libel. To support this point you must be satisfied that by the publication of this book, the Indigo-planters as members of the Landholders and British Association, as a class of persons, were degraded and treated with contempt. I will now come to the great question involved. Gentlemen, you have to determine by your verdict, not only that this is a libel, but also from the circumstances connected with its publication, that malice could be shown. In justice to the defendant I will express myself clearly on that point. Lord Mansfield in an indictment in the case of the *King vs. Woodfall* which was for libel—and I must say that this prosecution has assumed that character—clearly laid down the law.

And then the great champion for the liberty of the press Mr. Erskine, writes also on the same subject. .

I will explain what he means, and what forms part of his judgment. Where an act is unlawful, unless proof of justification or excuse in shown, the criminal intention is implied. Now it must be shown in this case, that there is an absence of entire malice showing that Mr. Long was actuated by an honest and conscientious belief, that the act he was doing, was for the interest of society, and though however gross the libel may be, these are circumstances which ought to be taken into consideration, namely how far he was influenced by publishing that book. On the other hand, you have to consider how far the extracts referred to by Mr. Peterson, go to negative that assumption, namely that he acted with a honest and *bonafide* belief, that the publication would benefit society. Whatever evidence of malice was to be seen from the book itself, that without the evidence of express malice,

the charge must fall to the ground. The question would be entirely whether he was influenced by such a feeling or not. If I am wrong, gentlemen, either of the learned counsel, who appear in this case, could take my poinion or judgment elsewhere. That being the case the important question involved is this and I told you that it referred to the press itself. Mr. Peterson has told you that until the passing of Fox's Act, the Judge and the Jury were pulling in contrary directions. The Judge annihilating the juri, and the jury disgusted and alienated, until the Act was passed. The trial of the Dean of St. Asaph led to that alteration of the law, and a declaratory Act was passed which I could contend for as the law of the land, and a greater boon has not been conferred than by this change of the law. But after the passing of that Act, no attempt has been made to alter it, and in the cases tried subsequently no point was ever raised to question its validity. Lord Mansfield had a right to give that opinion, that it was better to leave the question of libel or no libel with the jury and this case, gentlemen, will be left to you and to you alone, without an expression one way or the other, falling from me.

I will now come to the position of things in England as to what is considered really fair and legitimate discussion, or what in other words you are to attack and what you are not to attack, and that is the liberties of the press. I will read the opinions of the authorities immediately bearing on the case. It will be no opinion of mine but of far greater men, those who never sat in this Court. I told you of the case of the Dean of St. Aspah and a remarkable circumstance then took place. The Judge who was Mr. Jones, published a dialogue supposed to be the scholar of the Dean of St. Asaph and just as that libel was being published, he was promoted to the bench and was sent down to India and the dialogue published was very strong in its terms and Mr. Erskine commented in that case. He says :—

"We will therefore maintain and assert by all legal means, this sound and essential privilege, the point and ground of every other. We will maintain and assert the right of instructing our fellow subjects with every sound and conscientious consideration, which may promote the public papers, and while we render obedience to Government and to law, we remember at the same time, that as they exist by the people's consent and for the people's benefit, they have a right to exercise their power to watch over their due execution and to preserve the beautiful structure, by pointing out as they arise, their defects and corruption, which the hand of time never fails to sqread over the wisest of human institutions.

And then in a more recent case where the principle was contend ed for, was in the case of the *King vs. Thomas Payne* and this was the proposition contended for and which was always upheld. He says :—

[His Lordship here read an extract.]

Then followed the law laid down by Lord Mansfield in the case of libel :—

"Where an act, in itself independent, becomes criminal when done with a particular intent, then the intent must be proved and found. But where the act in itself is unlawful as in the case of a libel, the proof of justification or excuse lies in the defendant, and in failure thereof, the law implies a criminal intent. Most luminously expressed to consider the sentence, namely that when a man publishes a libel and has nothing to say for himself, in explanation or exculpation, a criminal intent need not be proved, it is an inference of common sense, not of law. But the pulication of a libel does exclusively show criminal intent, but it is an implication of law in failure of the defendant's proof. Lord Mansfield in the same case expresses himself further :— There may be cases where the publication may be justified or excused as lawful or innocent, for no act which is lawful or innocent, for no act which is not criminal, though the paper be a libel, can amount to such a publication of which a defendant ought to be found guilty.

Supposing that the book be a libel reflecting on the planters, but if Mr. Long was actuated by *bonafide* and conscientious belief as put by Mr. Eglinton, not to reflect on the opinions of the natives, contending that he did so for the public welfare and interest of society, it is for you to say whether there is any malice or not by the mode of its publication and other ciscumstances taken in connection. But if as put forth by the learned counsel for the prosecution, the native community were entirely to blame, and if even the hundredth part of the charges they put forward were true, and that Mr. Long was a mere tool and machinery in their hands, that would be no justification whatever. It must be his own conscientious belief whether this book was for the interest of society at large or not. Why, gentlemen, I ask you, how is corruption to be attacked? How are classes of men who abuse the power vested in them to be attacked unless it is through the liberty of the press and freedom of discussion? I rejoice and I do feel the power and importance of a press; to watch over the acts of public men, to keep a vigilant eye over their doings and I must say I had a fair sample of it myself. If a Judge was not doing his duty the press should be set in motion and it will do him good. And if he were unjustly assailed he would with the assistance of public opinion put it down. If attacked unjustly, and very great allowance is made for it,—there is an appeal to public opinion and to that public opinion the papers must bow. That being the case, the question would be did not Mr. Long conscientiously believe at the time he published the work, that the course he was taking was for the interests of society. Gentlemen, I am certain you will not invade that strong constitutional principle, but you must look to the circumstances under which it has been published. It is a question which concerns the whole population. It is a principle held by all, and the papers would rely on it and they have the deepest interest beyond all society. I would well have been spared this labour and I wish to particularly impress upon you this principle because it is all important. I will now go through the contents of this document and I will do it as rapidly as I can. The indictment contains no less than twelve distinct charges of acts done

by Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal and I have marked the passages referring to each particular point. The first charge made, is one of oppression, and you will find in page 6 of the book, there is a passage which has been relied on by Mr. Peterson, as a serious charge against the Indigo-planters, and I will call your attention to the most important part, the author's preface. The first is in page 7 and also in pages 12 and 13; (after referring to the several passages his Lordship went on to say). I now come to page—? and I must say, that I approach this passage with pain and sorrow. Although the views I entertain on the large question, I have put to you, but I must say that when I read this passage I dropped the book, with a feeling of disgust and horror, and I thought the Reverend gentleman might have at least spared us the affliction. I wonder that the clergy of England could have read in that book, the foul and filthy libel, which it contains against the females of England. I myself, as all of you, have sprung from the middle class of society, that class which has done more for the interests of society than any other, and these women, who come out here to share the toil and isolation, and the miseries, they have to undergo. These women, high minded, gentle, ready to go to be transported for a certain number of years, these are the women,—and I see there are natives here who would blush to read this foul calumny—who are charged with doing that, which no man of principle, I say, would ever have attempted to charge them with. I blush, that the defendant, a clergyman of the Established Church, should have so far forgotten himself, as to give publicity to this foul libel, against the women of England. What is the charge. But I say nothing of that great body of men the civil servents, many of whom are my personal friends, and the Indigo-planters. I have never given an opinion respecting the Indigo system, I have no feelings whatever in the matter; I am a Judge. Can any body read this foul calumny as to the state of the English ladies in the Mofussil, without being horrified. They had been treated cruelly, and in a manner, beyond description. If they found necessary to attack the Indigo-planter, they might have spared his wife, but this foul calumny does not concern the planters alone, the Magistrates, who are to administer justice in the Mofussil, those high minded gentlemen. who lead the life, I may say, of a hermit,—they have also been attacked. It was clearly insinuated, and it was useless to attempt to conceal it, that the Indigo-planters would even prostitute his wife to gain an advantage over the ryot, and the Magistrate, who had taken his oath to administer the law partially and justly, would break that solemn promise. When you come to consider this passage, and I don't want to excite or carry your sympathies for the parties maligned, but I ask you—Is a publication of that kind to proceed from a clergyman of England—and I must say that it is a circumstance, which goes far to rebut that assumption, that he did it with a firm conviction, namely for the interests of society. Could the defendant, who is a man of intelligence and education, have believed that this filthy insinuation, that the wife of the planter had prostituted herself, would have benefitted the public? How far can he believe, that imputation, would have brought about

a reformation, or thrown some light on the subject. Speak of factories being burnt down, speak of tortures, even go to the abduction of the women : I thought a clegyman would have spared the reflection, that the women, who come out here to suffer with their husbands, the toils and hardships of an Indian climate, had prostituted themselves. Gentlemen here it is that the worst part of the case lies, I can't, if I were to wish it, pass it over. (His Lordshlip here read the passage referred.) What does that mean? Does it not mean, that the Magistrate carries on an illicit intercourse with the wife of his neighbour, and in violation of his oath, and on the face of the high position, he occupies; that he is living with the wife of a planter, and that as a consequence, he was influenced in his decisions between the planter and the ryot? If you can point any other constructions, no one will rejoice more than I do, but see what follows; (His Lordship here read another passage). I will ask—Is this book to go forth to the world, to the mothers and daughters of the middle classes of society? Is this to be the fate of their daughters? It is a charge, gentlemen, against every European in the country, be he planter, civilian, or soldier, and I am certain every one will agree with me, that such a charge should never reach the ears of the English people. To whom was this charge to go before. I asked Mr. Lushington, whether the list which I have before me, was such a list ever before been received by the Bengal Office, which illustrated the manners and the literature of the natives, and the answer he gave, was No. Now this was very material, because it showed the kind and extent of publicity, it was desired to give it. (His Lordship here read the names in the list) And gentlemen, these are the parties, a writing of this kind, was to be circulated. A man has a perfect right to do this, and don't misunderstand me. He has a right to communicate any document, to Government, but he must not publish it. If Mr. Long felt that the interests of society required it, that the oppression of the planters should be made public, and he was induced by that belief, the question would be, as I have more than once repeated, whether he was actuated by that feeling. You can't question the document which I hold on this Bench. The great question of constitution justifies the act, such is the doctrine recognised by the British nation, and which Mr. Eglinton had so ably put to you, namely the liberty of the press; but at the same time that privilege must not be abused. I would read to you Stephen's Commentaries, and you would see, how it is defended there. He says :—"But our limit in this and in many other respects, corresponds rather with the middle age of Roman Jurists, when little learning and humanity were in their full vigour, and exhibited a moderation sufficient to protect it. from any imputation of infringing the liberties of the press. This liberty, when rightly understood, consists in laying no possible restraint upon publications, and, not in freedom of free circulation of criminal matter when published. Every freeman has an undoubted right to lay what sentiments he pleases before the public; to forbid this, is to destroy the freedom of the press; but if he published what is improper, mischievous or illegal, he must take the consequences of his own temerity. To subject the press

to the restriction, as was formerly done, both before and since the Revolution, is to submit all freedom of sense, to the prejudice of one man, and make him the arbitrary and infallible Judge of all controverted points, in learning, religion and God; but to punish, as the law does at present, any dangerous or offensive writing, which when published, shall on a fair and impartial trial be adjudged to be of a pernicious tendency—which is necessary for the preservation of peace and good order of Government and religion—is the only solid foundation of civil liberty."

Therefore the liberty when rightly understood, is a criminal matter. As I told you before, the expressions and charges, must be such as justified him in making use of them. You have heard the extracts read by Mr. Peterson, and you must form your own conclusions. I may have in the discharge of my duty made observations, which may not find favour here. Men's feelings might get better of their judgements. Men may not be inclined to grapple with the question as I thought fit. My observation may be treated indifferently but I don't care. It shall never be said that this great constitutional question, the freedom of the press, had been flittered away by me and that I did not fully recognize that principle. And again you have to look to the conduct of the defendant; I have heard no apology, I have not heard single expression of regret. Mr. Eglinton had not stated what passages in the pamphlet the defendant approved of, and what he did not, and it must therefore be taken for, that he approved of the whole. The defendant through his Counsel ought to have at least disavowed, that the gentlemen were not capable of committing the crimes imputed to them in that book. It will be your duty, gentlemen, to say under all the circumstances, whether the prisoner is guilty of the charges mentioned in the two counts.

The jury then retired to consider their verdict.

After an absence of about an hour and a half, they returned to Court, to enquire of the Presiding Judge, whether assuming that the defendant believed the statements in the pamphlet to be true, it would be necessary to be shewn, that he was actuated by malice in the publication, before he could be found guilty.

His Lordship—said, if they believed, that the defendant had published and circulated, the book in question, for the interests of society, and that he conscientiously believed, that the publications of such a book would tend to bring about a reform of the indigo system, and was acting in a *bonafide* manner, he would be entitled to a verdict of acquittal. If on the other hand, they were satisfied from the contents of the book, and the manner of publication and circulation, that the defendant had been actuated by a feeling of animosity towards the planters of Lower Bengal, with the view of degrading, injuring, and bringing this class into contempt and ridicule, in that case the law would infer malice, on the part of the defendant, and the verdict must be guilty.

The jury upon this retired a second time, and on coming into Court, returned a verdict of guilty on both counts.

MR. EGLINTON—represented that judgement, might not be given, until the expiration of the four days, within which a new trial might be moved for, as the defendant might be desirous of moving in arrest of judgment.

HIS LORDSHIP—said, it was not his intention to pass sentence then. But it was usual to assign some ground, at the time in support of the application. What was the suggestion on which the motion was made?

MR. EGLINTON—said he was not prepared with any ground and did not know that such motion would be made, but he merely asked for time to consider the matter.

HIS LORDSHIP—said, he saw no reasons for allowing a delay of four days, but would reserve the sentence until Monday morning the 22nd instant, when any application might be brought forward.

Third day–July 22nd, 1861.

(BEFORE A FULL BENCH.)

SIR MORDAUNT WELLS—asked Mr. Eglinton whether he intended to move in arrest of judgment, and for a new trial.

MR. EGLINTON—replied that such was his intention on last Saturday, but it had been determined that he should apply to the court for an extension of time. He believed, he had a right to four days, and he was not prepared to go into the argument just now; he would ask the Court to defer passing sentance till Wednesday.

HIS LORDSHIP—wished to know if the learned counsel had any other grounds to state, in arrest of judgment.

MR. EGLINTON—said he simply relied upon a misdirection to the jury, and he might also state it was not his intention to move for a new trial.

HIS LORDSHIP—thought if it was Mr. Eglinton's intention to move for a new trial, he must go into evidence.

MR. EGLINTON—said, he would no apply for a new trial but certainly he would move in arrest of judgment.

The case was accordingly adjourned till Wednesday the 24th instant.

Fourth day–July 24th, 1861.

(BEFORE A FULL BENCH.)

MR. JUSTICE WELLS—asked if any motion was to be made in this case.

MR. EGLINTON—said that he appeared for the defendant, and that he moved in arrest of judgment upon the verdict delivered on Saturday last. The general ground upon which he moved was, that the indictment on the face of it disclosed no legal offence. There were two counts. The first was for an alleged libel on Mr. Brett personally, and on him as the editor of the *Englishman* news-paper. The legal definition of a libel was well known, and having regard to the passage, in the author's preface of the *Nil-Darpan*, relied on by the prosecution, it was not a libel in law. At most it imputed to the editor of the *Englishman*, that he wrote in favour of the interests of the Indigo-planters of Bengal, for fee and reward in that behalf, an imputation which was not libellous, in as much as, it was the admitted practice in every civilized community, where every profession, every political state of feeling, every religious body, every phase of society had its own organ, which it supported, and whose aim was to advance the interest of the opinions it represented. As to the remainder of the passsages relied on, the reasonable construction of the language used, was to create, not a comparison with Judas Iscariot as stated by the prosecution, but an *illustration* merely of the writer. The Court was bound to look at the words as used, and to construe them in their ordinary grammatical sense. As to the second count, the learned counsel submitted that no indictment could be preferred on the basis, of a body such as the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal, being libelled. The body in question, was too indefinite, too vague to support such an indictment, and the authorities which Mr. Justice Wells referred to, at the trial (and which the learned Counsel referred to at great length) did not support the position, that such an indictment as the present could be supported. As to others of the passages, (which the Counsel commented upon) they did not impute any improper interference by the planters, with the administration of Justice in the mofussil, and the passages relied on, and the suggestions arising upon them, and stated by the learned Judge in his charge to the jury on Saturday, were in no way warranted by the passages themselves. Those passages must be read with reference to the native ideas, which prompted their production, and when so understood, they in no way raised the inference, which had been suggested with reference to them. On the whole, the indictment set forth no legal offence and the judgment ought to be arrested.

MR. NEWMARCH—as junior Counsel, follwed Mr. Eglinton and contended that if the principle, that the planters could be considered as a recognized class or body, was once conceded, it would establish a very dangerous precedent, and in point of fact, it would be recognising a doctrine, that a libel could be mentioned on the whole of mankind. The planters were not a defined body. An action for libel might be on the

same principle, against a person, who should say that the natives were an untrustworthy race and could not be beliveed.

THE CHIEF JUSTICE (SIR BARNES PEACOCK)—said, This is a motion in atrest of judgement, and the Court has been called upon to overrule the finding of the jury, which was that the defendant was guilty of the offence on both counts. The general ground upon which the motion is made, is that the indictment disclosed no legal offence. The jury have found a verdict of guilty on both counts, which implies that the statements published were malicious, and I understand by that finding, the conclusion the jury have come to, is this, that the defendant did not show reasonable or lawful justification for publishing the alleged libel. If a man wilfully does an act, by which he subjects any party to disgrace and obloquy in point of law, he is guilty of libel. In Mr. Starkie's work, it is laid down, and I have no doubt that the principle is correct, that malice in its legal and technical sense, denotes that the party publishing the libel, intended to degrade, unless he could prove he was not actuated by malice. The jury by their verdict have found malice. At the same time, a man may publish a libel against another, which may not amount to an indictable offence, because there may be circumstances for reasonable excuse or justification. A person may be asked to give his servant a character, and he may honestly and *bonafide* give him a character which, though it might be injurious to that party, still would not be an indictable offence. The circumstances, under which it was given and communicated to a third person, would be such, as to rebut the intention of malice. But if a person giving a character to servant, states that which is false, he would not able to rebut the imputation of malice. Further, if such a letter giving a character to a servant was published, and the jury found that the letter was written maliciously, and was a libel, the Court could not be called upon to say whether the letter was a malicious libel or not. That matter was found by the jury on the facts, and the Court could only deal with a question of law.

The first count states that "James Long intending to villify the said Walter Brett &c. &c." (His Lordship here read a portion of the indictment). The material statement, upon which the jury found a verdict, was the malicious intent, that is, it was an improper intent, and not justified by any reasonable or proper excuse. Then it is contended, that however wrong the intention of the party may have been in publishing the pamphlet, still the words in it, do not contain any imputation against the parties, and therefore could not be made the subject of an indictment. The question is what does the libel impute? It was argued, that the business of an editor of a news-paper, was to write for gain as every other man, who worked for his livelihood; and he wrote for particular interests. Most men are forced to write to earn their livelihood. But at the same time, they are bound to be honest and just, and to say that an editor, writes and endeavours to advocate the interests of a particular class or society, for the sake of pecuniary gain, and dishonestly to advocate the interests of any class to the detriment of another,

would be a libel. It has been said that every editor, like any other individual, exercises his particular calling for the sake of gain. How does this libel impute to Mr. Brett and the editor of the *Harkaru*, of having advocated a particular interest. Does it impute to them that, that they did so to earn a livelihood, or that they had been induced by some extraordinary reward to write up some particular interest? That is the imputation in the libel. The pamphlet says :—"I present the Indigo-planter's mirror to the Indigo-planter's hand; now let every one of them, having observed his face erase the freckle of the stain of selfishness from his forehead and in its stead, place on it the sandal powder of beneficence, then shall I think my labour successful, good fortune for the helpless ryots, and preservation of England's honor." This certainly appears to me to represent to the Indigo-planters, that if they looked into this paper, they would see true representation each of himself. Is this not reflection on a certain class? Each of them was to look at it to find his own picture. Then it goes on to say :—"Oh, ye Indigo-planters your malevolent conduct has brought stain upon the English nation &c. &c." Are we to say that this is not an imputation? Why, it is a serious charge against the character of individuals, and that is the sense which ordinary reader would read it. Then it goes on to speak of the editors of the two papers. Now can any ordinary person, reading that passage come to any other conclusion than that, it intended to impute to them that, they had been so far enslaved by the hope of receiving money, to write up the Indigo interest; and the Indigo-planters were aware of that, and that they the editors threw the poor helpless people of this land into their (the planters') mouths. It is a libel or is not a libel, to say that they had been enslaved by, this particular conduct to avocate the Indigo interest? It appears to me that it is a very grave charge; although they like any other person wrote for gain, still from the way it had been put, that he obtained the money for a particular purpose, namely, for supporting the Indigo interest, it appears to me, that there is no mode by which we can put a different construction than that, given by the jury, that the editors of those papers had been influenced, by a sum of money, to advocate the cause of the planter to the prejudice of the ryots.

Well the next question is, as to the second count. It is contended—as I understand the argument,—that because the publication is against a class of individuals, that, that class is not sufficiently described, and that there ought to be some precise definition, or in other words, that the class is not defined as a recognised body by law. Now it appears to me wholly unnecessary, to state the numbers of the class. Supposing a person libelled the army, would it not be sufficient to say that the army was so libelled. That the charges brought against it, were calculated to bring discredit upon it. It is unnecssary to state more. Can any one doubt that the second count refers to two classes, namely, the manufactures of the Indigo-plant and the ryots, who cultivated it? It appears to me perfectly clear, that this indictment does shew that the classes

mentioned are those, I have just stated. And then the indictment goes on :—"In consequence &c. &c." Therefore, I think that it sufficiently appears, according to the verdict found by the jury—that the two classes of persons were in existence at the time of the publication; *viz.*, the Indigo-planters and the ryots; and that serious disturbance arose between them; and therefore it states—"that the said James Long intending thereby to villify &c. &c. (His Lordship here read a portion of the indictment.) Cases were cited to show that the class was too indefinite. Now I don't know that the class could be better defined than it has been. I don't know how it could be defined more minutely. It is not an action brought against one planter,—that he was the person alluded to. It is sufficient to say, that he and others of his class, were alluded to. Then the case of the Jews has been cited. That was an information prayed for, against the act of a person, who published about the murder of a child by certain Jews, because the child was begotten by a Christian. Now it appears to me that the statement that certain Jews, who had lately arrived from Portugal and were living in Broad Street, were the murderers, was establishing an identity, precisely in the same way as the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal. The only difference appears to be, that Broad Street is a much smaller place compared to that part of Lower Bengal, where the Planters resided several miles from eact other, but I maintain the principle is the same. The question is—Are we in a position to suppose, that any person reading this pamphlet, and having found therein the statement that disturbances had arisen between the two classes, could arrive at a different conclusion from that come to by the jury. Unless we, on reading the libel, put quite an unusual construction on the meaning of the passages, we could not by any possibility say, that it is not the planters of Lower Bengal that were alluded to in the publication. It has been cited, that the case of the clergy of the Diocese of Durham was a class known to the law. Now I don't think that makes any difference. Supposing the clergy of Durham, or the whole clergy of India were libelled, it would make no difference. No one could say, that that class was not sufficiently described. Supposing it was the whole clergy in India or the whole clergy residing in Bengal, won't that be sufficiently clear or definite? I think the law has very wisely provided, that Her Majesty's subjects ought to be protected. Therefore a libel, against a class unknown, as it had been forcibly urged, is on quite a different principle. If a libel were so written, that the parties against whom it was written, were unknown, and it was so general and so vague in its terms, that parties reading it, found it impossible to say, who was meant, that would be quite another thing. But when a person reading a publication supposed to be libellous, says "I know who this refers to, it refers to the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal," and all ordinary persons reading it, were of the same opinion, what else is wanted. Another case, that of the ***King vs. Williams*** had also been cited. Well that is the same case as I was telling you of the Diocese of Durham. Then came the case of the

King vs. Furdett, which refers to a libel published against the King's troops. That was not a libel against the whole of the troops, but only against a certain portion, The question was what portion it referred to, as only a portion, took part in the suppression of an affray which formed the subject of the libel. If it said the whole troops, then it would be sufficient to say, that the portion alluded to, was that which was sent out to quell the disturbance. In that case it was said, that the troops who were employed to put down the riot at Manchester, had been guilty of great inhumanity, and had been cutting down the mob, and that the writer, intending to villify the soldiers, did write and so forth. The jury found that the libel did apply to that portion of the troops, and it was consequently sufficiently defined and described.

Then a note from Swanston's reports was also cited. I don't think that affects this case, as it merely referred to the case of the Jews. Then as to the case *King vs. Jenna,* where it is shown, that a libel upon a number pf people reflected upon the whole. Let us see whether this pamphlet would not apply to the whole of the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal. It says, "I present the Indigo-planting mirror to the Indigo-planters' hands; now having observed his face, erase the freckle of stain of selfishness from his forehead &c., &c." Then if you look at this paper, you would surely say that is a libel against every one of that class, because it tells them to look into this mirror and erase the freckle of the stain of selfishness and so on. Then the case *King vs. Evans* was also cited. That related to a libel against certain Magistrates, and it was held not to be libel. No doubt in that libel some of the inuendoes were not set forth. But it won't be safe to rely on that case in any way, because it did not refer to any authority upon which the principle was now put. Then in the case of the *King vs,* ——, which was a libel against one of the Court of Directors, who was charged with having used some improper influence on the shippers of tea, by which the price of green tea was raised. It was held in that case, that the libel reflected on the whole body of the Court of Directors. Now I think that sufficient cases have been cited to show, that according to Law, a class may be vilified. Another case, which was cited by me was that of *Lafano* and *Malcomson,* decided by the highest authority. That applied only to this extent. If any individual class applies to maintain an action of damages for libel, and unless that class of persons were in partnership they can't sue for damages. Each one can't come here separately to sue for damages. It is unnecessary to decide in this case, which of the Indigo-planters was alluded to, in this publication, because every one of them is asked to look into the Mirror. If any one of them could say—"I am one of the men alluded to and I have hereby suffered damages which I wish to recover, that would be sufficient, but is the Court to be inundated with suits of that kind? The Lord Chancellor in delivering his judgment in that case, which is peculiarly applicable to this, ruled that a particular class can be ascertained.

(His Lordship here read the authority) and Lord Campbell, the late Lord Chancellor concurred in that view. That case goes to show, that a class may be libelled, or any particular individual may seek to recover damages, which he may have suffered by a libel. Then comes the question as to the class itself. Is this Court as I have remarked, to be inundated with suits from each individual member of that class? Has not the class itself a right to be protected in a criminal prosecution, to obviate the necessity of each party suing separately? I therefore think the class has been sufficiently described. The only remaining question is, as to the libel bringing the parties themselves into disrepute and discredit.

Now the second count, found by the jury is, that the publication was intentional, that is it was malicious, written and published for the purpose of lowering them in the estimation of the public and society. (His Lordship here read an extract from the publication). Does this not show that the Indigo-planters as a body, had exercised an improper influence over the Magistrates to induce them to give decision contrary to law? Now what would be supposed if one of the Judges of this Court was said to have acted in that way. It appears to me, that this passage is sufficient to support either of the two allegations, and to be capable of such an interpretation, as to bring the planters into disrepute. Mr. Eglinton, I think has scarcely argued in respect to the first part of this allegation, whether the words in this libel were sufficient to cast an imputation on the whole body of the planters. And it is not necessary for the Court to say, whether the words are sufficient to bring the planters into discredit. Now the first part of this libel has been referred to by Mr. Eglinton as being obscure. It is set out in page 66 of the pamphlet and I will read it.

"*Darogah.*—Did not the Magistrate say he will come here this day.

Jamadar.—No sir, he has four days more to come. At Sachigunge on Saturday, thay have a Champagne-party and ladies' dance. Mrs. Wood can never dance with any other but our Saheb, I saw that when I was bearer. Mrs. Wood is very kind, through the influence of one letter, she got me *jamadary* of the jail."

That is, the wife of Mr. Wood, and through her influence the bearer got the *Jamadaryship* of the jail, and the Magistrate was the only person with whom she would dance, and that in consequence of the Champagne-party, probably the Magistrate would not come. Now whether this would lead fairly to the inference, that Mrs. Wood would improperly influence the Magistrate, is a question which the jury have already decided. Mrs. Wood is the character in the play, and is described as the wife of an Indigo-planter. But it is said that this does not mean a planter's wife, and still he is asked to look into this mirror and see his reflection. It must therefore be taken, that it is one of the Indigo-planters, and that it means to impute a general course of conduct of the whole body, and that they did by

such means exercise an undue influence over the Magistrates of the districts. In my opinion it is incapable of bearing any other interpretation. Supposing it was published that, the Judges of this court had when a suit was pending, received such a letter from one of the litigant parties, would it not be said that an improper influence had been exercised over them? Are not Magistrates in the country entitled to the same protection as this Court? It appears to me that it is doing as great an injustice to the Indigo-planters, to say that they used an improper influence over the Magistrates, through their wives, as it would be to say that the Judges of this Court had while suits were pending, received such a letter from one of the litigant parties. Then the question is, whether there is anything in the libel, to show that any imputation, independant of that influence, over the Magistrates, had been cast to bring into contempt the administration of Justice in the mofussil. It is unnecessary to read the whole pamphlet to prove this. The learned Counsel for the defence had contended that the words used in the pamphlet, are not capable of receiving such an interpretation, and if any point is capable of receiving such an interpretation it must be read and construed in the same way, as any ordinary reader would. I don't say the jury were right, or that they were wrong in the conclusion they have come to. The pamphlet having been published with certain meanings, attached to it, we are called upon to say, that in point of law this libel is not capable of receiving such an interpretation. The whole of the passages in this book have not been relied on, but a great number of them were selected, and upon them a great number of inuendoes set out. If the jury found the interpretation of that particular conduct, which the inuendoes aver, how can we be called upon to say that no part of it bears that interpretation. The Court reading a libel, must look at it, in the same way, as any ordinary reader, and unless the Court could say that the words cannot bear the interpretation put upon them by the jury, and that the part cannot be read in that particular sense, the verdict cannot be set aside. All we have to say, is that the jury having come to that conclusion, we must see whether the words are capable of bearing that interpretation.

I shall read one more passage which is in page 101. It says—

"The *cobra de capello,* like the Indigo-planters, with mouths full of poison, throw all happiness into the flame of fire. The father through injustice died in the prison, the elder brother in the Indigo-field, and the mother being insane through grief for her husband and son, murdered with her own hands, a most honest woman. Getting her understanding again, and observing my sorrow, the ocean of grief again swelled in her. With that disease of sorrow, came the poison of want, and without attending to consolation, she also departed this life."

It appears to us that reading the whole of this passage and others set out in the indictment, the construction put by the jury is a correct one. We also find that they had been published with malice, that is

that defendant was not actuated in the publication, with a conscientious and *bona fide* belief, that it was for the good of society. That being the finding of the jury, it is impossible for us to say, that the publication is not a libel.

Mr. Justice Wells—asked Mr. Long if he had any thing to say in mitigation of punishment.

Mr. Long—said, he had a statement to make, which he would, with the permission of the Court, read :—

My Lord, as the result of this trial involves consequences extending far beyond the sphere of Calcutta, or even of India, I beg to submit, for your Lordship's consideration, the following point referring mainly to the motives which actuated me in publishing the *Nil Darpan*.

Tried by the mode of a criminal prosecution, in Court, I had no opportunity to make a personal statement to the Jury. I can only, previous to your passing sentence, mention what is personal to myself, as to the motives, which actuated me to publish the *Nil Darpan*, on the grounds of my being a Missionary, an expounder of native feeling as expressed in the Native press, a friend to securing peace for Europeans in the country, and a friend to the social elevation of the natives.

My Lord, it is now more than twenty years since I came to India. During that period, I have never appeared in a Court of Justice, as a plaintiff or defendant; my occupation have been of a very different character, and my time has been spent chiefly among natives, engaged in vernacular teaching, in the charge of a body of Native Christians, and in the promotion of Christian vernacular literature. These pursuits, along with my interest in the rural population, called my attention to the vernacular press of India, its uses and defects, as well as its being an exponent of the native mind and feeling. It is in connection with the latter branch of my labours, that I appear here to-day as publisher of the *Nil Darpan*, which I edited with the view of informing Europeans of influence, of its content, as giving native popular opinion on the Indigo question. This work, (the English translation I mean) was not got up at the suggestion of natives or even with their knowledge, and was not circulated among them. It was commenced, at the request of others. Many of the remarks of Mr. Peterson the Counsel for the prosecution, are strongly in my favor, because if, as he stated, the work was so injurious in its vernacular dress, was I not doing a public service by making such a work known in English? Not in Calcutta, where it might only lead to more bitter controversy, and where men's interests are so near concerned that all representations would have been useless, producing irritation, not conviction, I circulated it, chiefly among men of influence, and those connected with the British legislature, which to the oppressed of whatever color or country, has always afforded sympathy and redress. I have aimed for the last ten years in my leisure hours, to be an exponent of natives, opinion, in its

bearing on the spiritual, social and intellectual welfare of natives of this land; as for instance, when applied to, on the part of the Court of Directors seven years ago, to procure for their Library, copies of all original works in Bengali or as when, lately I sent to Oxford, by request, copies of all Bengali translations from the Sanskrit; or when I have procured for Missionaries, Government, Rajas &c., vernacular books of all kinds. I should have been a strange person, indeed, had my opinions harmonised with all the chaos of opinion in those various publication. Why ! at the request of Missionaries I have procured Anti-Christian works for them, as they wished to know what was written against Christianity.

I am charged with slandering English women in the *Nil Darpan.* Now, waiving the point, that it is only planters' wives the native author refers to—I myself believe planters' wives are as chaste as any other females of English Society in India, and it was my impression that the author only referred to some exceptional cases, not giving them as specimen of a class of females. The view that I and others, who know oriental life, have taken of this part, relating to females, is, it gives the Eastern notion of the high indelicacy of any woman, who exposes her face in public, or rides out in company with a gentleman, I have heard such remarks made, of my own wife; but I treated them as a specimen of village ignorance. Sir F. Shore in his "Notes on Indian affairs," states instances of a similar kind, and Lieutenant Burton, who went disguised as a pilgrim to Mecca, mentions the greatest reproach, the pilgrims there made against the English was, that they shook hands with their neighbours' wives ! I regret, however, I did not append a note of explanation to this part.

I hold in my hand the first drama ever translated, and that by an illustrious Judge of this Court—Sir W. Jones, in order to give a view of Hindu Society. Similar service was rendered by Horace H. Wilson, by Dr. Taylor, and various other persons. I beg to say, I was far from wishing to vilify planters generally, though from sincere conviction and enquiry, opposed to the system. Thus when summoned before the Indigo commission, my evidence here was considered, even by the planters' friends as moderate and free from invective. I was elected a member, of a Subcommittee of the Calcutta Missionary conference, to watch the progress of the Indigo controversy, and it was never objected then, that any of my actions in connection with this conference on this subject, were for the purpose of vilifying. I have never lived near planters, nor have I had any personal altercation with them that would lead me to a vindictive course.

I ask, when hundreds, yea, thousands of Bengali books were submitted by me, during the last ten years, to the notice of Europeans of influence, was the *Nil Darpan* to be the only exception? And wherefore? The ryot was a dumb animal who did not know his fuler's language. And at the time of this *Nil Darpan* appearing, matters on the Indigo controversy were assuming threatening aspect; so it was important, that men of the influence should know that the

wound was not a surface one, but required deep probing. Could I as a clergyman have withheld, a work of this sort, which indicated some of the causes of the deep seated aversion of Ryots to Indigo cultivation? This works, the *Nil Darpan* was sent to me, as hundreds of vernacular books have been, because it is known in many quarters that I take a deep interest in Vernacular literature. Here is an illustration : these two vernacular books were sent to me a few days ago from Benares—One Robinson Crusoe, in Hindi, the other a Choral Book in Urdu. Almost every week I receive new vernacular books and I make a point of bringing them to the notice of Europeans on various grounds. Sir F. Halliday honored my "Reports on the Vernacular Press" by publishing them; so did the present Government, in the case of publishing my Sketeh of Vernacular Literature; so did the Vernacular Literature, Religious Tract Society, Christian Tract and Book Society, shew their confidence in publishing various work of mine.

I will now state the grounds, why as a clergyman opposed to war, I published the *Nil Darpan.* My Lord, four years only have elapsed, since Calcutta was waiting in termbling anxiety for the result of the mutiny. Few could look with calmness on the future, while watch and ward were kept all night by the citizens. Many felt then, as I had long felt before, how unsafe it was for the English, to reside in India in ignorance of and indifference to the current of Native feeling. The mutiny, in common with the Afghan war, has showed that the English in India were generally unacquainted with it; so a short time previous to the mutiny, the Sonthal war burst out unexpectedly to the public. For a long period, Thuggee and torture were prevailing in India, without the English knowing any thing of them. Had I, as a missionary, previous to the mutiny, been able to submit to men of influence, a native drama which would have thrown light on the views of sepoys and Native chiefs, how valuable, might the circulation of such a drama, have proved although it might have censured, severely, the treatment of Natives by Europeans; the indifference of sepoy officers, generally towards their men; and the policy of Government to Native states. Such a drama might have helped to save millions of money, and torrents of human blood. In Kabul, the Authorities, through a false security founded on ignorance of native opinion, entailed a loss of fifteen millions sterling, on the State and damage of England's prestige. Has Calcutta forgot the lessons taught by the mutiny? I ask, was it very malicious to reveal to the governing race, the latent current of Native thought and feeling, on the subject of Indigo, which was convulsing the whole country, and threatrning it with anarchy, incendiarism, and assassination? Would I have been justified to withhold, contributing my mite at such a crisis, to the great object of, rousing men of influence, by shewing them, from a Native source, that the dissatisfaction was deep seated, and that the wound must be thoroughly probed, before healing measures could be efficacious.

My Lord, the mutiny has passed away; who knows what is in

the future? As a clergyman, and a friend to the peaceable residence of my countrymen in India, I beg to state the following, as a motive for my editing, such works as the *Nil Darpan*. I for years have not been able to shut my eyes, to what many able men see looming in the distance. It may be distant or it may be near; but Russia and Russian influence are rapidly approaching the frontiers of India. Her influence, so manifest in Cabul twenty years ago, as shewn in a recent Parliamentary Blue Book, was beginning to be felt in India during the last mutiny; now she goes on the principle of *divide et impera;* previous to invasion, she gains over the Native population in various countries to her side. Could I, then, as a clergyman, have watched with apathy measures like those, in connection with the Indigo system. which were furthering this Russian Policy, and which might lead to war and dissensions, that would retard for a long period, the progress of religion, education and peaceful commerce I now speak merely my own honest conviction on this point, and I ask, if this conviction has any foundation in reality; as also if there be any ground for another, as deeply rooted in my mind, that mere armies can no more secure the English in India, than they established the Austrians in Italy. Was it not my duty, as a clergyman, to help the good cause of peace, by showing that the great work of peace in India, could be best secured, by the contentment of the Native population, obtainable only by listening to thier complaints, as made known by the Native press and by other channels. I pass over French views in the East, but I say forewarned is forearmed, and even to the expense of wounding their feelings, in order to secure their safety, I wish to see the attention of my countrymen directed to this important subject.

As a missionary, I have a deep interest, in seeing the faults of my countrymen corrected, for after a residence of my twenty years in India, I must bear this testimony–that of all the obstacles to the spread of Christianity in India, one of the greatest, is the irreligious conduct of my own countrymen. Thousands of natives have said to me, "We Judge of the Christian religion by what your countrymen do, not by what they say; by the life, not by the doctrine".

For twenty years, I have, as a missonary, been in close and confidential intercourse with natives of all classes. Often and often has my spirit been harrowed, and almost crushed by a close view of the condition of the ryot, his wants and his sufferings; shut out from that ability to read, without which the pages of inspiration are locked up to him. I can see in the improvement of his social condition, a means of enabling him to enjoy the light of knowledge. I have circulated many pamphlets in England on "The ryot his teachers and torturers" and on the evils, resulting from the ryots, not having a sound vernacular education. When I have not shrunk from exposing many social evils to which the ryot is subject, I beg to submit, could I have avoided, in my position exposing his sufferings, from the indigo system?

THE CHIEF JUSTICE— here stopped Mr. Long, stating that the

Court were not willing to here any thing that he had to address to them in his defence. That it was not the length of the matter, he was now leading but its substance, they objected to as irrelevant.

*[Influential men in England have deeply sympathised with me in these points, and have said :—"you and others that expose those recesses of human suffering and degradation must let us know the results," and I have been, my Lord amongst those masses for years, and hope, as long as I live, have a brain to think and a pen to write, to advocate the social elevation of the masses, as incidental with the progress of mental and moral light. Should I not have been a traitor to the religion, I professed, whose great founder's motto is, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them"—had I not availed myself of all legitimate opportunity, to bring the wants and sufferings of the ryots, and the feelings and views of native generally, to the notice of men, who had the power of remedying them? It may be called too political a course, as some now unduly restrict that term; but Christianity itself is political in the extended sense; far in the early ages, it assailed the slavery of the Roman Empire; in the middle ages, it afforded an asylum to the serfs, against the oppressions of the feudal chiefs; at the period of the Reformation, it brought freedom to the peasant's home; and in mordern days it has abolished slavery in the West Indes; it has protested against American Slavery, and is now throwing its mantle of protection round the aboriginal tribes throughout the world. In 1856, I delivered an address in Calcutta to the friends of Missions, on "Peasant degradration an obstacle to Gospel propagation." No one then objected to that address on the ground of its being political.

My Lord, I am sustained in this course by the conviction of, I trust, an enlightened conscience, and confidently relying on the continued sympathy of many friends, both among the Europeans and Native community, and of all in India and Great Britain, who desire to see India governed, not merely for the advantage of its fluctuating population from Europe, but for the benefit of and with considerate regard, for the feelings and interests of the 180,000,000 natives, over whom stretches the *Ægis* of the Queen and Parliament. I know I shall have the sympathy of good men, the friends of the natives, in India and in England, and of all those throughout the world who believe in the indissoluble connection of spiritual and intellectual improvement.

My Lord, a Court of Law has decided that the work is a libel; and it is my duty to submit to that verdict and to act accordingly. My conscience convicts me however of no moral offence, or any offence, deserving the language used in the charge to the jury. But I dread the effects of this precedent. This work being a libel, then the exposure of any social evil, of caste, of polygamy, of Kulin Brahminism, of the opium trade, and of any other evils which are

* The portion, within brackets, was not read in the Court, but is given here, to keep up the continuity.

supported by the interests of classes of men, may be treated as libels, too, and thus the great work of moral, social and religious reformation may be checked.]

My remarks are ended, my Lord. I beg to hand in an affidavit.

Mr. Long.—put in an affidavit deposing on oath his motives for publishing the libel, and also a little pamphlet on the same subject which appeared in the *Friend of India* a few days ago.

These were read by the Clerk of the Crown at the direction of the Court.

Sir Mordaunt Wells—then passed sentence on the defendant as follows :—

Mr. Long, after a careful and patient investigation of the charge preferred against you, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on both counts, and the Court having refused to arrest the judgment, on the motion of your learned Counsel, it is now my painful duty to award the punishment, called for by the verdict of the jury, and after an anxious consideration of all the circumstances of the case. You have been convicted of the offence of, wilfully and maliciously libelling the proprietors of the *Englishman* and *Harkaru* newspapers, and under the second count, of libelling with the same intent, a class of persons designated as the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal. I most earnestly, I may say most strongly and pointedly, called upon the jury to uphold and vindicate if necessary, by their verdict, the right of free discussion, and to be careful, lest by their verdict, the liberty of the Press might be endangered. In summing up the case, over over and again, I recognized and maintained the right of every man, to instruct his fellow subjects, by every sincere and conscientious communication, which may promote the public happiness, and I stated distinctly and emphatically the privilege possessed by every man, of pointing out those defects and corruptions, which exist in all human institutions. Nevertheless the jury pronounced a verdict, which I have the satisfaction of feeling, rests upon a consitutional basis, and cannot be used hereafter against the liberty of the Press. There is not a person, who would have rejoiced, more than myself, if the jury have returned a verdict of not guitly, on the ground that they believed, you had acted conscientiously and for the interest of society, in publishing this book. I grieve to say that, that verdict could not have been given without those twelve gentlemen believing, that you had not been actuated by a feeling of animosity towards the Indigo-planters, in publishing and circulating such a gross and scandalous libel. Partly through your instrumentality, nearly three hundred libels have been circulated, and according to the evidence of Mr. Jones, who gave his evidence most properly, with the apparent sanction of the Bengal Secretariat, and at the public expense. I am bound to say, that such a proceeding is without a parallel, in the history of Government departments in England; and as one of the Judges of the

Supreme Court, it is my duty to state, and I do so most sincerely, that I trust such a transaction may never occur again in this country, as such a proceeding must necessarily undermine that feeling of respect and confidence, which ought to exist on the part of the governed, towards those, who are placed in authority over them. I did at the trial, as I now do, scrupulously abstain from expressing any opinion, directly or indirectly, as regards the personal motives or feelings, which actuated the officers of Government, in sanctioning the circulation of this book. It is the safest plan in life, always to assume that public men, act from purpose and just motives, until the contrary is established, and it does not follow by any means, the officials who allowed the paper to be circulated, in the slightest degree acted illegally. The pamphlet was sent forth, unaccompanied by a single word of caution, or explanation, and the Indigo-planters of Lower Bengal have no means of tracing the extent of the injury, inflicted upon them by the circulation of the libel; but is there not reason, for apprehending, that certain persons in England, may have been induced to bring forward serious but groundless charges, against the Indigo-planters. It is quite impossible to realize fully the irreparable mischief, you have occasioned, by causing this libel to be circulated in England. There is one feature in the case, I cannot pass over without special notice, I mean the position, you hold in society, as a clergyman of the Church of England. I am certain, the Bishop of Calcutta, of whom it may be said, that he is respected and beloved by the entire Christian Community, will deeply lament the circumstance of one of his clergy, being convicted of libelling a large and influential body of gentlemen, scattered over a portion of his extensive diocese, and I am well assured that the great body of the clergy with few exceptions, will sympathise with their Diocesan, on the present occasion. The fact of your being a clergyman, is an aggravation of your offence, and when you state publicly in Court, that the advance of Christianity, is impeded by the irreligious conduct of many Europeans. I think such an expression of opinion on your part, when called upon to receive the sentence of the Court, for libelling many of your countrymen, is rather out of place, and perhaps the great majority of the Europeans, may think that your conduct has not done much to promote real practical Christianity. You, of all men, ought to have inculcated and stood forth as the teacher of that inestimable precept "Do unto all men, as you would, they should do unto you." My duty is a distressing one, but I must not shrink from the performance of it.

The sentence of the Court is, that you pay a fine of Rupees 1,000 to our Sovereign Lady the Queen, and that you be imprisoned in the Common Jail to Calcutta, for the period of one calendar month, and that you be further imprisoned till the fine is paid.

চতুর্থ ভাগ

সংকলিত তাত্ত্বিক নিবন্ধ

প্রসঙ্গ নীলদর্পণ

সংকলিত তাথ্যিক নিবন্ধ

সুনীল মিত্র

২৪

উৎসর্গ

পরমপূজ্য প্রপিতামহ দীনবন্ধু মিত্র ও

তাঁহার যুগান্তকারী নাটক নীলদর্পণ

সম্বন্ধে সংকলিত তাথ্যিক নিবন্ধটি—

বংশের বর্তমান প্রজন্মের প্রতিভাবান

চিত্র-শিল্পী, আমার পৌত্র, প্রাণাধিক

শ্রীমান ভাস্বরকে উৎসর্গ করে

অপরিমেয় তৃপ্তিলাভ করলাম।

সুনীল মিত্র

ভূমিকা

দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের নীলদর্পণ শুধু নাটক নয়, এটি একটি বস্তুনিষ্ঠ সামাজিক দলিল। নীলকর সাহেবদের অকথ্য অত্যাচারের বিরুদ্ধে এক জ্বলন্ত প্রতিবাদ। এই নাটকের ইংরেজী অনুবাদ নিয়ে ঝড় উঠেছিল। শোনা যায়, এটির ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদ করেন মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত, যাঁর নাম গোপন রাখা হয়, সহায়তা করেন রেভারেণ্ড জেমস্ লং, মুদ্রণ করেন আর প্রচার করেন সরকারী সচিব সেটনকার। নীলকর সাহেবদের মামলায় লং সাহেবের একমাস জেল আর এক হাজার টাকা জরিমানা হয়, যে টাকা জমা দিয়ে দেন কালীপ্রসন্ন সিংহ। মুদ্রাকর ম্যানুয়েলেরও জরিমানা হয়। আর সেটনকারকে চাকরি থেকে সরিয়ে দেওয়া হয়। এমনই ছিল নীলকর সাহেবদের দাপট।

তাদের বিরুদ্ধে দুর্ব্বল বাঙালী রায়তদের শক্তি কতটুকু! নাটকের দুর্বৃত্ত রোগ সাহেব গর্ব করে বলেছেন, "হা হা হা আমারা নীলকর, আমরা যমের দোসর হইয়াছি, দাঁড়ায়ে থেকে কত গ্রাম জ্বালাইয়া দিয়াছি, পুত্রকে স্তনভক্ষণ করাইতে করাইতে কত মাতা পুড়ে মরিল, তা দেখে কি আমারা স্নেহ করি, স্নেহ করিলে কি আমাদের কুটি থাকে।" (তৃতীয় অঙ্ক, তৃতীয় গর্ভাঙ্ক) এই সব নির্মম উক্তি যে মিথা বাগাড়ম্বর নয় তা প্রমাণিত হয়েছে ইণ্ডিগো কমিশনের নিকট প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীদের সাক্ষে।

বাঙালী রায়তেরা প্রায় পঞ্চাশ বছর মার খেয়েই গেল, যাবা প্রতিবাদ করল শ্যামচাঁদ চাবুকের ঘায়ে আর লেঠেলের *ঠেঙ্গানিতে* তাদের অনেকে প্রাণ দিল, যেমন নাটকের নবীনমাধব। গর্ভিনী ক্ষেত্রমণির পেটে আঘাত করল রোগ সাহেব, তাকে ধর্ষণের হাত থেকে বাঁচাল তোরাপ আর নবীনমাধব, কিন্তু শেষ অবধি ক্ষেত্রমণি প্রাণে বাঁচল না। নীলদর্পণ গভীর ট্রাজেডি। নবীনের বাবা গোলক চন্দ্র বসু নীলকর সাহেবদের সাজানো মামলায় কয়েদী হয়ে ক্ষোভে আত্মহত্যা করল, তার স্ত্রী উন্মাদিনী হয়ে কনিষ্ঠা পুত্রবধূকে হত্যা করে, জ্ঞান ফেরার পর নিজেই মারা গেল। এ যেন মৃত্যুর করুণ শোকযাত্রা। নীলদর্পণ মানুষের মনে গভীর ধাক্কা দেয়। শোনা যায় অভিনয়কালে এক দর্শক বিচলিত হয়ে নীলকররূপী এক অভিনেতার প্রতি পায়ের জুতো ছুঁড়ে মেরেছিল। দীনবন্ধু মিত্র নীলদর্পণ রচনার উদ্দেশ্য সম্পর্কে ভূমিকায় লিখেছিলেন—"নীলকরনিকর করে নীলদর্পণ অর্পণ করিলাম। এক্ষণে তাঁহারা নিজ ২ মুখ সন্দর্শনপূর্ব্বক তাঁহাদিগের ললাটে বিরাজমান স্বার্থপরতা-কলঙ্ক-তিলক বিমোচন করিয়া তৎপরিবর্ত্তে পরোপকার-শ্বেতচন্দন ধারণ করুন, তাহা হইলেই আমার পরিশ্রমের সাফল্য, নিরাশ্রয় প্রজাব্রজের মঙ্গল এবং বিলাতের মুখ রক্ষা।"

কিন্তুপ্রত সহজে দীনবন্ধুর উদ্দেশ্য সিদ্ধ হল না। ইংরেজ শাসকবর্গের অধিকাংশ স্বদেশীয়দের

পক্ষ নিল। বহু ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট্ পক্ষপাতদুষ্ট। সরকারী আইন পাশ হল নীলকরদের অসম চুক্তির সমর্থনে। তখন শুরু হল বাঙ্গালীর সত্যাগ্রহ, অসহযোগ আন্দোলন, মহাত্মা গান্ধীর প্রবর্তিত আন্দোলনের বহু আগে উনবিংশ শতাব্দীর তৃতীয় পাদে। মহাত্মা শিশির কুমার ঘোষ প্রভৃতি নেতাদের উৎসাহে বাঙালী কৃষক গর্জে উঠল, মেরে ফেল, কেটে ফেল, আগুন জ্বালাও তবু আমরা নীল বুনব না। হিন্দু পেট্রিয়টে হরিশচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায় লিখলেন, "২০ লক্ষ গরীব রায়ত মিলে স্থির করল তাদের ঘরসংসার বলিদান দিয়েও, এমনকি জীবন দিয়েও তারা নিজেদের জমিতে নীল বুনবে না, নীলকরদের সঙ্গে নতুন চুক্তি করবে না।" ২২শে মে, ১৮৭৪ সালে অমৃতবাজার পত্রিকায় লেখা হল, "নীলসংঘাত দেশবাসীদের প্রথম শেখাল মিলিত শক্তি আর রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলন। বাস্তবিক ইংরেজ আগমনের পর বাংলার এটি প্রথম বিপ্লব।" (হিস্ট্রি এণ্ড কালচার অফ দি ইণ্ডিয়ান পীপল, ৯ম খণ্ড, প্রথম ভাগ, পৃঃ ৯৩৫)

বাঙ্গালীর এই লজ্জা ও গৌরবের কাহিনীর পিছনে বিরাট প্রভাব ছিল 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটকের। আমেরিকায় ক্রীতদাস প্রথা রোধে 'আংক্ল্ টম্স্ কেবিনের' যে ভূমিকা, নীলদর্পণ নাটক তার থেকে কিছু কম নয়। দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের এই জাজ্বল্য সৃষ্টিকে নতুন করে তুলে ধরেছে বর্ত্তমান গ্রন্থে—'প্রসঙ্গ নীলদর্পণ'। গ্রন্থের লেখক সুনীল মিত্র। এই মহৎ কার্যের জন্য আমি তাঁকে অকুণ্ঠ অভিনন্দন জানাই। তিনি দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের বংশে উত্তরসূরী, এই গ্রন্থ রচনায় তাঁর অধিকার আছে। তিনি প্রথমেই পাঠকদের কাছে তাঁর প্রণম্য পূর্বপুরুষের জীবন কাহিনী ও কর্মকৃতি তুলে ধরেছেন। বিখ্যাত ব্যক্তিরা দীনবন্ধুর যে প্রশস্তি করেছেন, তারও উল্লেখ আছে এই গ্রন্থে, এমনকি তাঁর প্রতি বিদ্রূপেরও। নীলদর্পণের অনুবাদ সম্পর্কেও আলোচনা আছে। পরিশেষে নীলের ইতিহাস নাটকটির পটভূমিকে পরিষ্কার করে তুলেছে, যার ফলে পাঠক সম্প্রদায় নাটকটির অন্তর্নিহিত তথ্য হৃদয়ঙ্গম করতে পারে। এমন একটি মূল্যবান গ্রন্থ রচনার জন্য লেখক সুনীল মিত্র আমাদের প্রশংসার পাত্র। আশাকরি পাঠকবর্গ এই গ্রন্থের সমাদর করবেন।

ডঃ প্রতাপ চন্দ্র চন্দ্র

প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় শিক্ষা সমাজকল্যাণ
ও সংস্কৃতি মন্ত্রী

বিষয়বস্তুর অনুসূচী

নিবন্ধকারের নিবেদন — তথ্য-উৎস সারণি

নিবন্ধকারের নিবেদন

১৮৬০ খৃষ্টাব্দে মূল নীলদর্পণ নাটক এবং অতঃপর ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দে মধুসূদন-কৃত মূল নাটকের ইংরাজি অনুবাদ প্রকাশের পর, বহুগ্রন্থে, সমালোচনায়, পত্রিকায় এই নাটক, নাট্যকার, ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদ সংক্রান্ত মামলা, মঞ্চে অভিনয় ইত্যাদি সম্বন্ধে, বিক্ষিপ্তভাবে নানান তথ্য প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। যেমন একসূত্রে ফুলগুলি একটি সম্পূর্ণ মালায় গ্রথিত হয়, তেমনি বিশ্লেষণ, মন্তব্য ও ব্যাখ্যার সহযোগে সেই বিক্ষিপ্তভাবে প্রকাশিত তথ্যগুলির একত্রিত প্রকাশনাই এই নিবন্ধের উদ্দেশ্য। এই প্রচেষ্টায় লেখক শুধুই মালাকার।

নিবন্ধে ঐতিহাসিক-সত্য তথ্যের সহিত, দু'একটি ঘটনা, যাহা জনশ্রুতির মাধ্যমে আজও প্রচলিত, অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হয়েছে। এগুলি হয়ত অতিরঞ্জন-দোষে দুষ্ট, কিন্তু ইহার মধ্যে নীলদর্পণ নাটক সে সময় যে আলোড়ন সৃষ্টি করেছিল, ভাবপ্রবণ বাঙ্গালীর মনে তার প্রতিক্রিয়ারই অভিব্যক্তি। ঐচ্ছিক-চিন্তন, অর্থাৎ, 'এইরূপ হইলেই ভাল হইত' — এই আবেগও হয়ত প্রতিফলিত।

এই নিবন্ধটি প্রাসঙ্গিক তথ্যের 'সম্পূর্ণ-সংকলন'—এ কথা বলার দুঃসাহস রাখি না। তবে সংকলনের ব্যাপ্তির জন্য সদিচ্ছা ও আন্তরিক প্রয়াসের অভাব ছিল না — এ কথা স্বীকারে কোনও দ্বিধা বা সংকোচ নাই। উদ্ধৃত তথ্যের প্রামাণিকতা প্রসঙ্গে, বিদগ্ধ পাঠকগণের কাছে লেখকের বিনম্র প্রতিশ্রুতি—ইহা সত্য যে ইহার মধ্যে মিথ্যা বা সত্যের অপলাপ নাই।

গ্রন্থের ভূমিকার স্বল্পপরিসরে, নীলদর্পণ নাটকের পটভূমির বিশদ ব্যঞ্জনাধর্মী বিবরণ একটি অমূল্য সংযোজন। এই সাহিত্য কর্মটি গ্রন্থের শুধু মান বিবর্ধনই করেনি, আশা রাখি, বিদগ্ধ পাঠকবর্গের কাছে গ্রন্থটির গ্রহণযোগ্যতারও সহায়ক হবে। এই অনুগ্রহের জন্য আমি শ্রদ্ধেয় প্রতাপ চন্দ্র চন্দ্রের নিকট চিরকৃতজ্ঞ।

শ্রীরঙ্গম — **সম্মত**

বি এফ্ - ৩৫
বিধাননগর
কলকাতা-৭০০০৬৪

সুনীল মিত্র

তথ্য-উৎস সারণি

নিবন্ধটি উদ্ধৃতি-ভিত্তিক। সে কারণে নিম্নধৃত পঞ্জীতে, উদ্ধৃত তথ্যের উৎসগুলি, ক্রমিক-সংখ্যাসহ উল্লিখিত হয়েছে। তথ্য-অনুসন্ধানী, সাহিত্যানুরাগী পাঠকদের সুবিধার্থে, নির্দেশিকা হিসাবে, আলোচিত-বিষয়ের সঙ্গে বন্ধনীর মধ্যে, উদ্ধৃতির প্রাসঙ্গিক উৎসের ক্রমিক-সংখ্যার উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে।

বিষয়

নীলদর্পণের নাট্যকার

দীনবন্ধু-জীবনী

জন্ম — জন্মস্থান — বংশ পরিচয়

নদীয়া জেলায়, ছোট নদী যমুনা যে গ্রামটিকে প্রায় চারিদিকে বেষ্টন করে ক্ষীণস্রোতে প্রবাহিত, সেই চৌবেড়িয়া গ্রামে মার্চ/এপ্রিল, ১৮২৯ খৃষ্টাব্দে (৬) * এক অসচ্ছল পরিবারে দীনবন্ধু জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। দীনবন্ধু তাঁর সুরধুনী কাব্যে (প্রথম ভাগ, অষ্টম সর্গ) চৌবেড়িয়া গ্রামের এই নদী বেষ্টিত অবস্থিতির বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন.— "পাক দিয়ে বেড়ে যাব চৌবেড়িয়া গ্রাম/বিনত দীনের যথা, অতি দীনধাম।"

দীনবন্ধুর পিতার নাম কালাচাঁদ মিত্র। তাঁর ছয়টি পুত্রের মধ্যে 'গন্ধর্বনারায়ণ' ছিলেন সর্ব্বকনিষ্ঠ। এরকম শোনা যায় যে সহপাঠিদের — 'উঃ গন্ধ, গন্ধ,' উপহাসে উত্যক্ত হয়ে তিনি পিতৃদত্ত 'গন্ধর্বনারায়ণ' নাম পরিবর্তন করে দীনবন্ধু নাম গ্রহণ করেন। (১০)

বাল্যকাল — মাত্র দশ বছর বয়সে, গ্রামের পাঠশালার পাঠ শেষ করে, স্থানীয় জমিদারী সেরেস্তায় ৮ টাকা বেতনে চাকরী করেন। উচ্চশিক্ষালাভের প্রবল আগ্রহে, পাঁচ বছর এই চাকরী করবার পর পিতার অমতে, কলিকাতায় পিতৃব্য নীলমণি মিত্রের আশ্রয়ে, তাঁর শিমুলিয়া শিবনারায়ণ দাস লেনস্থ বাসস্থানে এসে ওঠেন এবং গৃহস্থলির কাজকর্ম করে লেখাপড়া চালাতে থাকেন। (১০)

ছাত্রজীবন — লঙ সাহেবের অবৈতনিক স্কুলে কলিকাতায় শিক্ষার শুরু। পরে, হিন্দু কলেজের ব্রাঞ্চ স্কুলে (কলুটলার হেয়ার সাহেবের স্কুলে) ইংরাজি শিক্ষা আরম্ভ করেন এবং ১৮৫০ খৃষ্টাব্দে জুনিয়র বৃত্তি লাভ করেন ও হিন্দু কলেজের চতুর্থ শ্রেণীতে ভর্ত্তি হন। ১৮৫১ খৃষ্টাব্দে চতুর্থ শ্রেণীতে আবার জুনিয়র বৃত্তি পরীক্ষা দেন এবং যথাসময়ে জুনিয়র বৃত্তি লাভ করেন। এই পরীক্ষায় তিনি বাঙ্গলায় সর্ব্বোচ্চ স্থান অধিকার করেন। পরের বছর— ১৮৫২ খৃষ্টাব্দে—হিন্দু কলেজের তৃতীয় শ্রেণী থেকে পরীক্ষা দিয়ে সিনিয়র বৃত্তি লাভ করেন। ১৯শে জানুয়ারী, ১৮৫৩ খৃষ্টাব্দে, দীনবন্ধু শিক্ষকতা কর্মের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হন। দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণী থেকে ১৮৫৪ খৃষ্টাব্দে, এপ্রিল মাসে, দীনবন্ধু সিনিয়র বৃত্তি পরীক্ষায় ৩০ টাকা বৃত্তি লাভ করেন। কলেজ ছেড়ে দীনবন্ধু কিছুদিন শিক্ষকতা করেন—ইহার উল্লেখ দুইটি পত্রিকায় পাওয়া যায়—'ভারত-সংস্কারক (৭ই নভেম্বর, ১৮৭৩)' ও 'তমলুক পত্রিকা (১ম পর্ব্ব, ৪র্থ খণ্ড)'। (৬)

দীনবন্ধু যে বিশেষ মেধাবী ছাত্র ছিলেন, তাহা বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের দীনবন্ধু-জীবনীতে উল্লেখ আছে— "তিনি কলেজের একজন উৎকৃষ্ট ছাত্র বলিয়া গণ্য ছিলেন।" (১)

দীনবন্ধুর জন্ম তারিখ প্রসঙ্গে — দীনবন্ধুর জন্মদিনের তারিখ জানা নাই। তাঁর পুত্র ললিত চন্দ্র মিত্রের মতে, দীনবন্ধুর জন্মমাস ও বৎসর — চৈত্র; ১২৩৬ বঙ্গাব্দ। (৬) সেই হিসাবে, মার্চ—এপ্রিল, ১৮২৯ খৃষ্টাব্দ। এই তারিখটি সুবল চন্দ্র মিত্র সংকলিত — 'সরল বাংলা অভিধান'-এ সমর্থিত। (৯) এ বিষয়ে কিছু দ্বিমত আছে—বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র ও বঙ্গীয়-সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ প্রকাশিত জীবনী অনুসারে, দীনবন্ধুর জন্ম বৎসর—১২৩৮ বঙ্গাব্দ (১৮৩০ খৃষ্টাব্দ)। (১) (৬)

কর্মজীবন — উচ্চশিক্ষা শেষ করার আগেই, দীনবন্ধু ১৮৫৫ খৃষ্টাব্দে, ১৫০ টাকা বেতনে, পাটনায় পোষ্টমাষ্টারের চাকরী গ্রহণ করেন। এই পদে ছয় মাস কাজ করার পর তিনি বিশেষ সুখ্যাতি অর্জন করেন এবং দেড় বছর পরেই তাঁর পদবৃদ্ধি হয় — উড়িষ্যা বিভাগে ইন্‌স্পেক্‌টিং পোষ্টমাষ্টার পদে উন্নীত হন। ইহার পরে — নদীয়া—ঢাকা—নদীয়া—ঢাকা—উড়িষ্যা—নদীয়া—এইভাবে ক্রমান্বয়ে বদলীর পর কৃষ্ণনগরে (নদীয়া বিভাগ) কিছুটা থিতু হন। ডাকবিভাগের কর্মজীবনের সিংহভাগই তিনি কৃষ্ণনগরে অবিস্থিত ছিলেন। সেখানে একটি বাড়ীও ক্রয় করেন। (১) (৬)

১৮৬৯ খৃষ্টাব্দের শেষে অথবা ১৮৭০ খৃষ্টাব্দের প্রথমে, তিনি সুপারনিউমারি ইন্‌স্পেক্‌টিং পোষ্টমাষ্টার পদে কলিকাতায় বদলী হন। ১৮৭১ খৃষ্টাব্দে, লুসাই যুদ্ধে ডাকের বন্দোবস্ত করবার জন্য তাঁহাকে কাছাড় যেতে হয় এবং এই কার্যভার সুসম্পন্ন করে অল্পকালের মধ্যেই কলিকাতায় ফিরে আসেন। কলিকাতায় অবস্থানকালে, মৃত্যুর এক বছর আগে, ১৮৭২ খৃষ্টাব্দে 'রায় বাহাদুর' খেতাব পান। (৯) দুর্ভাগ্যবশতঃ, ডিরেক্টর জেনারেল 'হগ' ও পোষ্টমাষ্টার জেনারেল 'টুইডি', (দীনবন্ধুর তদানীন্তন উপরওলা)র মধ্যে বিবাদের সূত্রে পোষ্টমাষ্টার জেনারেলের সহকারী (সুপারনিউমারি পোষ্টমাষ্টার জেনারেল) পদ থেকে দীনবন্ধু অপসৃত হন এবং ১৮৭২ খৃষ্টাব্দে ইষ্ট ইণ্ডিয়ান রেলওয়ের ইন্‌স্পেক্টর পদে নিযুক্ত হন। (৩) (৬)

দীনবন্ধু ডাকবিভাগের বিভিন্ন পদে থাকাকালীন কর্মদক্ষতার বিশেষ পরিচয় দেন, কিন্তু সীমিত উন্নতি ছাড়া তাঁর প্রাপ্য পদোন্নতি ও বেতন বৃদ্ধি হয়নি। এ প্রসঙ্গে বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র দীনবন্ধুর জীবনীতে লিখেছেন—

> "দীনবন্ধুর যেরূপ কর্ম্মদক্ষতা এবং বহুদর্শিতা ছিল তাহাতে তিনি যদি বাঙ্গালী না হইতেন, তাহা হইলে মৃত্যুর অনেকদিন পূর্ব্বেই তিনি পোষ্টমাষ্টার জেনারেল হইতেন, এবং কালে ডাইরেক্টর জেনারেল হইতে পারিতেন। কিন্তু যেমন শতবার ধৌত করিলে অঙ্গারের মালিন্য যায় না, তেমনি কাহারও কাহারও কাছে সহস্র গুণ থাকিলেও

কৃষ্ণবর্ণের দোষ যায় না। Charity যেমন সহস্র দোষ ঢাকিয়া রাখে, কৃষ্ণচর্মে তেমনি সহস্র গুণ ঢাকিয়া রাখে।" (১)

অবশ্য, এই প্রসঙ্গে ইহাও উল্লেখ্য যে — Friend of India-র সম্পাদক ও Times of India (London) -এর বিশেষ সাংবাদিক, James Routledge, তাঁর — English Rule and Native opinion in India — গ্রন্থে বলেছেন — ১৮৭১ খৃষ্টাব্দে; লুসাই যুদ্ধে ডাকের সুবন্দোবস্তের জন্য দীনবন্ধু মিত্রকে রায় বাহাদুর সাম্মানিক উপাধি দেওয়া হয়। (২)

দীনবন্ধু মিত্র ১৮৭২ খৃষ্টাব্দে ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগরের উদ্যোগে প্রতিষ্ঠিত 'হিন্দু ফ্যামিলি অ্যানুয়িটি ফাণ্ড' প্রতিষ্ঠানের বোর্ড অব ডিরেক্টরের সদস্য নির্বাচিত হন। (৬)

বিবাহ ও দাম্পত্য জীবন — দীনবন্ধুর অল্পবয়সে বিবাহ হয় নাই। হুগলীর উত্তরে, বংশবাটি গ্রামে তাঁহার বিবাহ হয়। তাঁহার দাম্পত্য জীবন সম্বন্ধে, একমাত্র, 'অভিন্ন-হৃদয় সুহৃদ' বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র লিখিত জীবনীতেই কিছু জানা যায়—

"একটি দুর্লভ সুখ দীনবন্ধুর কপালে ঘটিয়াছিল। তিনি সাধ্বী স্নেহশীলা পতিপরায়ণা পত্নীর স্বামী ছিলেন। .... দীনবন্ধু চিরদিন গৃহসুখে সুখী ছিলেন। দম্পতি-কলহ কখন না কখন সকল ঘরেই হইয়া থাকে, কিন্তু কস্মিন্ কালে মুহূর্ত নিমিত্ত ইঁহাদের কথান্তর হয় নাই। একবার কলহ করিবার নিমিত্ত দীনবন্ধু দৃঢ় প্রতিজ্ঞ হইয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু প্রতিজ্ঞা বৃথা হইয়াছিল। বিবাদ করিতে পারেন নাই। কলহ করিতে গিয়া তিনিই প্রথমে হাসিয়া ফেলেন, কি তাঁহার সহধর্ম্মিণী রাগ দেখিয়া উপহাস দ্বারা বেদখল করেন, তাহা এক্ষণে আমার স্মরণ নাই।" (১)

প্রয়াণ — স্বল্পকালের ব্যবধানে, ক্রমান্বয়ে বদলী ও ইন্‌স্‌পেক্‌সনের কাজে ভ্রমণের অতিরিক্ত পরিশ্রমে দীনবন্ধুর শরীর ভাঙ্গিয়া পড়ে। ১৪/১৫ কার্ত্তিক, ১২৮০ বঙ্গাব্দ, ১লা নভেম্বর, ১৮৭৩ খৃষ্টাব্দ, বহুমূত্র ও কারবাঙ্কল বিস্ফোটক রোগে, বাঙ্গলা সাহিত্যের দিকপাল, কৃষকবন্ধু, 'বাংলার রঙ্গালয়ের স্রষ্টা' দীনবন্ধু অকালে (আনুমানিক ৪৪ বৎসর বয়সে), ৫২ বি, সুকিয়া ষ্ট্রীটের (অধুনা কৈলাস বসু ষ্ট্রীট) ভাড়া বাড়ীতে শেষ নিঃশ্বাস ত্যাগ করেন। প্রসঙ্গত উল্লেখ্য, দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যুর মাত্র চার মাস আগে, কবিকুল-চূড়ামণি মাইকেল মধুসূদনের জীবনাবসান হয়। (৯) অল্পকালের ব্যবধানে, বাঙ্গলার দুই সাহিত্যরথীর অকাল প্রয়াণ (মধুসূদন ৪৯ ও দীনবন্ধু ৪৪ বৎসর বয়সে) বাঙ্গলার সাহিত্য-জগতে সে এক বড় দুঃসময়!

মৃত্যুকালে দীনবন্ধু রেখে যান—স্ত্রী অন্নদাসুন্দরী ও সাত নাবালক পুত্র — চারু, শরৎ, বঙ্কিম, সুশীল, কিরণ, ললিত, জ্যোতিষ এবং একমাত্র কন্যা, সর্ব্বকনিষ্ঠা অতিপ্রিয় তমালিনি

("তাই তাই 'তমালিনি' তাই তাই তাই।/বিদেশে বিষাদে মরি দেশে চলে যাই।"—'প্রবাসীর বিলাপ'—দ্বাদশ কবিতা)

পরিবারের অসহায় অবস্থা — এই অসহায় ও প্রায় নিঃসম্বল অবস্থায়, শুধুমাত্র আত্মমর্যাদাবোধ ও বিচক্ষণতা সম্বল করে, কাহারও আর্থসাহায্য ব্যতিরেকে, অন্নদাসুন্দরী — যিনি জীবনের শেষদিন পর্যন্ত (শনিবার, ২০ শে কার্ত্তিক, ১৩৩৩ বঙ্গাব্দ) পরিবারের সকলের নিকট 'মাজন্নী' (মা জননী) নামে ও ডাকে পূজিতা ছিলেন—সন্তানদের মানুষ করেছিলেন। অবশ্য নিকট প্রতিবেশী ও পরিবার বন্ধু, পণ্ডিত ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর, স্বনিযুক্ত অভিভাবক হিসাবে, প্রায় প্রতিদিনই দেখাশুনা করতেন।

এই প্রসঙ্গে একটি ঘটনার উল্লেখ অপ্রাসঙ্গিক হবে না। দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যুর পরে, প্রথম দুর্গাপূজার কিছুদিন আগে, পণ্ডিত ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর একদিন অন্নদাসুন্দরীর সঙ্গে দেখা করে তাঁর সন্তানদের ডাকতে বলেন—

উদ্দেশ্য ছিল, সদ্য-পিতৃহারা নাবালকদের পূজার নতুন জামাকাপড় কিনতে নিয়ে যাবেন। অন্নদাসুন্দরী তাঁর সন্তানদের ডেকে বলেন—"তোমরা আগে পণ্ডিতমশাইকে (পরিবারে এই নামেই তিনি পরিচিত ছিলেন) তোমাদের পূজার নতুন জামাকাপড়গুলি দেখিয়ে প্রণাম কর।" তিনি পূর্ব্বেই অনুমান করেছিলেন যে সহৃদয়, পরিবার-বন্ধু পণ্ডিতমশাই এবার ছেলেমেয়েদের পূজার নতুন জামাকাপড় কিনে দেবেন। এই প্রায় নিঃস্ব বিধবা মহিলার আত্মমর্যাদাবোধ ও দূরদর্শিতা লক্ষ্য করে, হৃদয়বান ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র স্তম্ভিত হয়ে যান — তাঁর চোখ দুটি জলে ভরে ওঠে। (১০)

দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যুর পরে, সুকিয়া ষ্ট্রীটের বাড়ী থেকে ৩ নং মদন মিত্র লেনে একটি বাড়ী ভাড়া করে, দীনবন্ধুর পরিবার কিছুকাল বসবাস করে। দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যুর সতের বছর পরে—দলিল অনুসারে, ২২ শে মার্চ, ১৮৯০ খৃষ্টাব্দ—'মা জননী' অন্নদাসুন্দরী মদন মিত্র লেনের ৩০/৩ নম্বর বাড়ীটি ক্রয় করে, নিজভবনে বসবাস শুরু করেন। দীনবন্ধুর স্মৃতিতে এই বাড়ীটির নাম রাখা হয়—'দীনধাম'। বর্তমানে, বাড়ীটির পরিবর্তিত ঠিকানা — ৬-এ, দীনবন্ধু লেন।

দীনবন্ধুর চরিত্র বিশ্লেষণে যে বৈশিষ্ট্যগুলি বিশেষ প্রাসঙ্গিক, নিম্নোক্ত কয়েকটি অনুচ্ছেদে সেইগুলি — সহানুভূতিশীলতা, বন্ধু-প্রীতি, হাস্যরসিকতা, সৎসাহসিকতা, বাগ্মিতা ও রাজভক্তি — শিরোনামায় বিবৃত। এই অংশটি মূলতঃ দীনবন্ধুর 'অভিন্ন-হৃদয় সুহৃদ' বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় রচিত তাঁর জীবনী-আশ্রয়ী। (১)

সহানুভূতিশীলতা — "বঙ্গদেশে আজকাল গুণবান ব্যক্তির অভাব নাই, সুদক্ষ কর্ম্মচারীর অভাব নাই, সুলেখকেরও নিতান্ত অভাব নাই, কিন্তু দীনবন্ধুর অন্তঃকরণের মত অন্তঃকরণের অভাব বঙ্গদেশে কেন—মনুষ্যলোকে চিরকাল থাকিবে। .... বিস্ময় ও বিশেষ প্রশংসার কথা এই যে, সকল শ্রেণীর লোকের সঙ্গেই তাঁহার তীব্র সহানুভূতি। গরীব, দুঃখীর মর্ম্ম বুঝিতে এমন আর কাহাকেও দেখিনা। .... যে সকল মানুষ পরের দুঃখে কাতর হন, দীনবন্ধু তাহার মধ্যে অগ্রগণ্য ছিলেন। তাঁহার হৃদয়ের অসাধারণ গুণ এই ছিল যে, যাহার দুঃখ, সে যেরূপ কাতর হইত, দীনবন্ধু তদ্রূপ বা ততোধিক কাতর হইতেন। .... তিনি বাংলাদেশের প্রজাগণের দুঃখ সহৃদয়তার সহিত সম্পূর্ণরূপে অনুভব করিয়াছিলেন বলিয়াই নীল-দর্পণ প্রণীত ও প্রচারিত হইয়াছিল। .... দীনবন্ধুকে যতলোক ভালবাসিত;আর কোন বাঙ্গালীকে যে, তত লোক ভালবাসিয়াছে এমন আমি কখন দেখি নাই বা শুনি নাই। সেই সর্ব্ব-ব্যাপিনী তীব্রা সহানুভূতিই তাহার কারণ।" (১)

বন্ধু-প্রীতি — "দীনবন্ধু বন্ধুবর্গের প্রতি বিশেষ স্নেহবান ছিলেন। আমি ইহা বলিতে পারি যে, তাঁহার ন্যায় বন্ধুর প্রীতি সংসারের একটি প্রধান সুখ। যাঁহারা তাহা হারাইয়াছেন, তাহাদের দুঃখ বর্ণনীয় নহে। .... মনুষ্য মাত্রেরই অহঙ্কার আছে;দীনবন্ধুর ছিল না;মনুষ্য মাত্রেরই রাগ আছে; — দীনবন্ধুর ছিল না। দীনবন্ধুর কোন কথা আমার কাছে গোপন ছিল না। আমি কখনও তাঁহার রাগ দেখি নাই। অনেক সময়ে তাঁহার ক্রোধাভাব দেখিয়া তাঁহাকে অনুযোগ করিয়াছি, তিনি রাগ করিতে পারিলেন না বলিয়া অপ্রতিভ হইয়াছেন। অথবা ক্রুদ্ধ হইবার জন্য যত্ন করিয়া, শেষে নিষ্ফল হইয়া বলিয়াছেন, "কই রাগ যে হয় না।" (১) দীনবন্ধু-বঙ্কিম বন্ধুত্ব যে কত গভীর ছিল, তাহা বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের এই হৃদয়স্পর্শি আক্ষেপের মধ্যে অনুমেয় — "যদি মানুষের প্রার্থনা সফল হইবার সম্ভাবনা থাকিত, তবে প্রার্থনা করিতাম যে, এরূপ সুহৃদের মৃত্যুকথা কাহাকেও যেন লিখিতে না হয়।" (১)

হাস্যরসিকতা — বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের ভাষায়—"হাস্যরসে দীনবন্ধুর অদ্বিতীয় ক্ষমতা ছিল। .... তাহার মত সুরসিক লোক বঙ্গভূমে এখন আর কেহ আছে কিনা বলিতে পারি না। তিনি যে সভায় বসিতেন, সেই সভার জীবনস্বরূপ হইতেন। .... হাস্যরসাবতরণায় তাঁহার যে পটুত্ব, তাহার প্রকৃত পরিচয় তাঁহার কথোপকথনেই পাওয়া যাইত। অনেক সময়ে, তাঁহাকে

সাক্ষাৎ মূর্ত্তিমান হাস্যরস বলিয়া বোধ হইত। দেখা গিয়াছে যে, অনেকে, "আর হাসিতে পারি না" বলিয়া তাহার নিকট হইতে পলায়ন করিয়াছেন। হাস্যরসে তিনি প্রকৃত ঐন্দ্রজালিক ছিলেন।" (১)

নিম্নধৃত কয়েকটি ঘটনার বিবরণের মধ্যে বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের মন্তব্যের প্রতিফলনই পরিলক্ষিত হয়।

বাকচাতুর্য — উনবিংশ শতকের গোড়ায়, ইংরাজি শিক্ষা ও সংস্কৃতির আন্দোলনে, বিকৃতপথে, সাহেবিয়ানা ও সুরাপানের কদভ্যাস 'ইয়ং বেঙ্গল' যুবকদের মধ্যে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। সে সময়ে অনেকের ধারণা, 'সধবার একাদশী' নাটকের 'নিমচাঁদ' চরিত্র—শিক্ষিত, বুদ্ধিদীপ্ত কিন্তু, বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের ভাষায়—"বিশুষ্ক-জীবন-সুখ বিফলিকৃত শিক্ষা, নৈরাশ্য পীড়িত মদ্যপ"—মধুসূদনের অসংযত জীবনাচরণেরই অনুকৃতি। দীনবন্ধু, তাঁর স্বভাবসিদ্ধ বাকচাতুর্যে এ অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করে বলেন—"মধু কি কখনও নিম হয়?" (৫)

প্রসঙ্গত উল্লেখ্য, 'সধবার একাদশী' নাটকে, নিমচাঁদের সংলাপ—"মাইকেল দাদা বাঙ্গলার মিলটন"—অপ্রকৃতিস্থ মাতালের উচ্ছ্বাস হলেও, বস্তুত ইহা দীনবন্ধুরই মাইকেল -প্রতিভার প্রশস্তি।

মজলিসি আলাপচারিতা — কৃষ্ণনগরে এক বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানে, বর ও বরযাত্রী পৌঁছানোর পরে প্রবল বৃষ্টিতে, কন্যার পিতা ভোজের যে আয়োজন করেছিলেন তাহা সমস্ত নষ্ট হয়ে যায়। সে সময়ে বরপক্ষের আপ্যায়নের ত্রুটি ছিল অমার্জনীয় এবং 'বর উঠিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার'-ও রেওয়াজ ছিল। কন্যার পিতা আবার রন্ধনের আয়োজন করেন কিন্তু তাঁর আশঙ্কা হয় যে দেরির কারণে বরপক্ষ হয়ত তাঁকে অপদস্থ করতে পারে। তাই তিনি দেওয়ান কার্ত্তিকেয় চন্দ্র রায়ের শরণাপন্ন হন—যদি তিনি উপস্থিত থেকে, রন্ধনের সময়টুকু বরপক্ষকে একটু শান্ত রাখেন। দেওয়ানজি তাঁকে বলেন—দীনবন্ধু মিত্র কৃষ্ণনগরে উপস্থিত আছেন, তাঁহাকে কোনও প্রকারে আসরে নিয়ে যেতে পারলে, নিশ্চিত কার্যসিদ্ধি হবে। পরের দুরবস্থায় সততই সহানুভূতিশীল দীনবন্ধু, অনুরোধ করা মাত্রই বিবাহ আসরে উপস্থিত হন। তাঁর হাস্যকৌতুকে, মজলিসি গল্পে, বরযাত্রীদের আসর এমন জমিয়া ওঠে যে, আহার প্রস্তুতের পর, প্রায় গভীর রাত্রে, কন্যার পিতা যখন বরযাত্রীদের আহারে আহ্বান করেন, তাহারা প্রায় সমস্বরে বলে ওঠেন—'আরে মশাই, খাওয়া পরে হবে'—এবং দীনবন্ধুকে আরও গল্পের জন্য পীড়াপীড়ি করতে থাকেন। (১৯৬৪ খৃষ্টাব্দে, জুলাই মাসে, কৃষ্ণনগর রাজবাড়ীতে

সমস্বরে বলে ওঠেন—'আরে মশাই, খাওয়া পরে হবে'—এবং দীনবন্ধুকে আরও গল্পের জন্য পীড়াপীড়ি করতে থাকেন। (১৯৬৪ খৃষ্টাব্দে, জুলাই মাসে, কৃষ্ণনগর রাজবাড়ীতে এক উপনয়ন অনুষ্ঠানে, অতিথি সভায়, সুরসিক, শিক্ষাবিদ্ নলীনাক্ষ স্যান্ন্যাল মহাশয়ের মুখে এ কাহিনী শুনেছি।)

এই রকম আর একটি ঘটনার উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায় ইন্দ্র মিত্রের 'করুণাসাগর বিদ্যাসাগর' গ্রন্থে। এক বড়মানুষের বাড়ীতে ভোজের আয়োজনে অনেক গণ্যমান্য ব্যক্তি এসেছেন। রান্নায় কিছু বিলম্বের জন্য নিমন্ত্রিতদের মধ্যে ধৈর্যচ্যুতি লক্ষ করে গৃহকর্তা, সভায় উপস্থিত বিদ্যাসাগর মহাশয়ের শরণাপন্ন হন। তখন বিদ্যাসাগর ও আর এক নিমন্ত্রিত ব্যক্তি, দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের একের পর এক গল্পে আসর এমন জমে ওঠে যে আহার প্রস্তুতের পর, বাড়ির কর্তাকে গল্প থামাবার জন্য বিদ্যাসাগরকে অনুরোধ করতে হয়।

যাবার বেলায় শেষ রসিকতা — মৃত্যুর কিছুদিন আগে, একদিন দীনবন্ধুর এক বিশেষ বন্ধু, জিজ্ঞাসা করেন—"দীনবন্ধু, তোমার সে হাস্যরস কোথা গেল? তোমার রস শুখাইতেছে, তুমি আর অধিককাল বাঁচিবেনা।" (১) সত্য, তিনি আর অধিককাল বাঁচেননি, কিন্তু জীবনের শেষদিন পর্যন্ত তাঁর হাস্যরস শুখায়নি। দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যুর কারণ বহুমূত্রজনিত বিস্ফোটক (কারবাঙ্কল)— প্রথমে পিঠে, কিছু উপশমের পর আর একটি পশ্চাৎভাগে এবং শেষে আর একটি বাঁ পায়ে হয়। এই সময় তাঁর এক বন্ধু দেখতে আসেন। মৃত্যুপথযাত্রী দীনবন্ধু ঈষৎ হেসে তাঁকে বলেন—"এবার আমায় যেতে হবে, ফোঁড়া এখন আমার পায়ে ধরেছে।" (১) মৃত্যু যখন আসন্ন, সেই বিষণ্ণ মুহূর্তে এই শান্ত, নির্লিপ্ত মানসিকতার মধ্যে দীনবন্ধুর নিখাদ 'রসরাজ' সত্তাই প্রতিভাত হয়।

সৎসাহসিকতা — দীনবন্ধু ডাকবিভাগে ভারতীয়দের মধ্যে এক উচ্চপদস্থ রাজকর্মচারী ছিলেন। তিনি বিলক্ষণ জানতেন যে তিনি যে নীলদর্পণ-এর রচয়িতা এ কথা প্রকাশিত হলে তাঁর অনিষ্টের সম্ভাবনা আছে। তবুও, বিবেকের তাড়নায় ও বাংলার কৃষকের দুর্দশায় ব্যথিত, দীনবন্ধু নীলদর্পণ রচনা করেন। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের মতে—'দীনবন্ধু গ্রন্থকারের নাম গোপন করিবার জন্য'—প্রকাশনায় লেখকের প্রকৃত নাম উহ্য রাখা ছাড়া আর কোনও চেষ্টা করেন নাই। (১) তিনি জেমস্ লঙ-এর বিচারের সময় প্রতিদিন আদালতে, প্রকাশ্যে উপস্থিত থাকতেন। জেমস্ রট্‌লেজ তাঁর লেখা—English Rule and Native opinion in India - বইতে লিখেছেন—

> ".... he was present in the court and ready to exchange places with Mr. Long if that had been possible" (২)

বাগ্মিতা — ইহা অনেকেরই অবিদিত যে দীনবন্ধু সুবক্তা ছিলেন। ইহার কারণ, প্রধানত, কর্মক্ষেত্রে অধিকাংশ সময়েই তিনি ইনস্‌পেকশনে ভ্রমণরত থাকতেন এবং সেকারণে সাধারণ্যে আয়োজিত সাহিত্য বা অন্যান্য বিষয়ক সভায় তাঁর উপস্থিতি সম্ভব ছিল না। তাঁর এই প্রতিভার কথা আমরা সম্যক জানতে পারি কৃষ্ণনগরে আয়োজিত এক সভায় হরিশচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায় সম্বন্ধে তাঁর বক্তৃতায়। (২)

কৃষ্ণনগরে অবস্থানকালে, ২৬শে জুলাই, ১৮৬২ খৃষ্টাব্দে, কৃষ্ণনগর পাবলিক লাইব্রেরীতে, হিন্দু পেট্রিয়টের সম্পাদক — নীলকর-অত্যাচারের কাহিনীর অক্লান্ত প্রচারক, দেশহিতৈষী সদ্যপ্রয়াত — হরিশচন্দ্র মুখোপাধ্যায়ের স্মৃতিতে একটি গৃহ (হরিশ চন্দ্র সমাজ) স্থাপনের অর্থব্যবস্থার জন্য একটি সভা অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। এই সভায় দীনবন্ধু যে বক্তৃতা দেন তার প্রশস্তি 'সোমপ্রকাশ'-এর ১১.৮.১৮৬২ সংখ্যায় বিস্তারিতভাবে প্রকাশিত হয়। সেই ভাষণের দু'টি বিচ্ছিন্ন অংশের নিম্নোক্ত উদ্ধৃতি থেকে দীনবন্ধুর বাগ্মিতা ও হরিশচন্দ্রের চরিত্র ও তাঁর অবদান সম্বন্ধে জানা যায়—

"হরিশবাবু যেরূপ দেশহিতৈষী ছিলেন, হরিশবাবু যেরূপ পরোপকারী ছিলেন, হরিশবাবু যেরূপ সুলেখক ছিলেন, হরিশবাবু স্বদেশের উন্নতির জন্য যে পরিশ্রম করিয়াছেন, হরিশবাবু রাজপুরুষদিগের যে সহায়তা করিয়াছেন, তাহাতে তাঁহার স্মরণার্থ কোন চিহ্ন স্থাপন করা না করা সমান, কারণ তিনি চিরস্মরণীয়, তিনি প্রাতঃস্মরণীয়, তিনি ভুলিবার যোগ্য নন, তাঁহাকে ভুলেও ভোলা যায় না।" ...... "তিনি বিলক্ষণ জানিতেন, সেই ভয়ঙ্কর সময়ে (*) একজন ইংরাজ যদি বলে এই ব্যক্তি আমাদের মন্দকথা বলেছে তবে তাহাকে তৎক্ষণাৎ কোন বিচার না করিয়া কোন প্রমাণ না লইয়া ফাঁসি দেয়, তা বলে কি হরিশচন্দ্র পিচপা হবেন, তা বলে কি হরিশচন্দ্র যথার্থ কথা লিখিতে সঙ্কুচিত হবেন, তিনি জানিতেন তাহার জীবন দিয়া দেশের যদি কিঞ্চিতমাত্র উপকার হয় সেই তার যথেষ্ট।" (২) (৬)

(*) সিপাই মিউটিনি দমনের পরবর্ত্তী সময়।

রাজভক্তি — নীলদর্পণ রচয়িতা দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের ইংরাজ-শাসন সম্বন্ধে কি মানসিকতা ছিল সে বিষয়ে বিশেষ কোন প্রকাশিত তথ্য নেই। ওই নাটকে তিনি একটি বিশেষ ইংরাজ সম্প্রদায়—নীলকর-এর অত্যাচার ও কুকর্মের ছবিই জনসমক্ষে তুলে ধরেছিলেন। ইহাতে শাসক ইংরাজের বিরুদ্ধে কোন কটাক্ষ নেই। হয়ত বলা যেতে পারে যে, শাসকগোষ্ঠীর ধারণায়, তিনি ইংরাজ শাসনের বিরুদ্ধে ত নয়ই, সম্ভবত স্বপক্ষেই ছিলেন। সেই কারণেই হয়ত নীলদর্পণের রচয়িতা হওয়া সত্ত্বেও সরকার তাঁকে 'রায় বাহাদুর' উপাধি প্রদান করেন। ইহা যে চাকুরী ক্ষেত্রে কর্মদক্ষতার স্বীকৃতি হিসাবে প্রদত্ত, সে কথা ভাবিবার বিশেষ কারণ নাই। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের দীনবন্ধু-জীবনীতে দ্ব্যর্থহীন ভাষায় (এই নিবন্ধের অন্যত্র উল্লিখিত),

কর্মজীবনে পদোন্নতি বা বেতনবৃদ্ধি ক্ষেত্রে তিনি কিরূপ বঞ্চিত হয়েছিলেন তাহা বিস্তারিতভাবে বিবৃত।

দীনবন্ধুর রাজভক্তি সম্বন্ধে অনুমান-ভিত্তিক বিশ্লেষণের কোন প্রয়োজন নাই, কারণ ইহা তাঁহার রচনার মধ্যেই পরিলক্ষিত হয়। ভিক্টোরিয়া-পুত্র 'প্রিন্স আলফ্রেড' -এর ভারত আগমন উপলক্ষে দীনবন্ধু রচিত দশস্তবকের—'লয়্যাল্টি লোট্স্'—অর্থাৎ 'রাজভক্তি শতদল'—কবিতার ছত্রে ছত্রে রাজভক্তির উচ্ছ্বাস বড়ই প্রকট—

"বসহে ডিউক ভাই, হিন্দু ভাই দলে / শ্বেত-শত-দল মালা দিই তব গলে"

" .... রাজপুত্র সিংহাসনে বড় শুভদিন / কে বলে ভারতে আর স্বাধীনতা-হীন?"

অথবা— 'রাজভক্তি রসে গলি, ভিক্টোরিয়া জয় বলি / করতালি দেহ সবে সুখে একবার;

পাইলাম এতদিনে জননীর কোল / ভিক্টোরিয়া জয় বলি দেহ হরিবোল।"

প্রথম প্রকাশিত নীলদর্পণের দীনবন্ধুর নিজস্ব লেখা ভূমিকাতেও, বৃটিশ শাসন ও শাসকের প্রতি অগাধ শ্রদ্ধা ও সুশাসনের প্রত্যাশা, মহারাণী ভিকটোরিয়া, গভর্নর জেনারেল ক্যানিং ও লেফটেনেন্ট গভর্নর গ্রান্টের নামের সঙ্গে সংযোজিত বিশেষণেও—যথাক্রমে, "দয়াশীলা প্রজা জননী", "উদার চরিত্র" ও ".... দুষ্টের দমন শিষ্টের পালন"—সুস্পষ্ট।

এই প্রসঙ্গে, সমসাময়িক বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের 'আনন্দমঠ' -এর উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে (১৮৮২ খৃষ্টাব্দ)। 'আনন্দমঠ' -এ, পরাজিত ক্যাপ্টেন 'টমাস'-এর উদ্দেশ্যে ভবানন্দের মুখে শুনি— "ইংরাজ আমাদের শত্রু নহে .... ইংরেজের জয় হউক, আমরা তোমার সুহৃদ" (তৃতীয় খন্ড, দশম পরিচ্ছেদ), এবং সত্যানন্দের প্রশ্নের উত্তরে; মহাপুরুষের উক্তিতে তারই প্রতিধ্বনি— " ..... ইংরেজকে রাজা করিব .....", " ..... শত্রু কে? শত্রু আর নাই। ইংরেজ মিত্ররাজ ....". (চতুর্থ খণ্ড, অষ্টম পরিচ্ছেদ)

দুই দিকপাল মনীষীর, আপাতদৃষ্টিতে, এই চরিত্র-বিরোধী মানসিকতার কারণ বা উৎস কি? তাঁহাদের জীবিতকালে তাঁহারা এ প্রশ্নের সম্মুখীন হন নি, সেকারণে রচনার বাহিরে, তাঁহাদের একান্ত ব্যক্তিগত মত জানার আজ আর কোন অবকাশ নেই। তবে, রচনার সমসাময়িক পটভূমিকার বিশ্লেষণে হয়ত আভাসে কিছু অনুমান করা যেতে পারে। ১লা নভেম্বর ১৮৫৮ খৃষ্টাব্দ, রাণী ভিক্টোরিয়ার ঘোষণা-পত্রের মাধ্যমে 'ইষ্ট-ইণ্ডিয়া কোম্পানী'-র শাসনের অবসান ও 'ব্রিটিশ ক্রাউন' কর্তৃক ভারতের শাসনভার গ্রহণের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরিবর্তন ঘোষিত হয়। পূর্বোক্ত রচনাগুলি এই পরিবর্তনের পরের রচনা। সেই প্রেক্ষিতে হয়ত অনুমান করা যেতে পারে যে, এই পরিবর্তনের পূর্ব্বকালে, অর্থাৎ 'ছিয়াত্তরের মন্বন্তর-১১৭৬ বঙ্গাব্দে'-এর পরবর্তীকালে দেশে যে অরাজকতা, নৈরাজ্য মানুষকে অসহায় করে তুলেছিল,

পটপরিবর্তনে সেই অবস্থার অবসান হবে, এই আশায় নূতন শাসন-যন্ত্র এবং শাসকগোষ্ঠীর সুশাসনের প্রত্যাশায়, ইংরেজ-রাজকে সুদিনের অগ্রদূত মনে করেছিলেন। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র 'আনন্দমঠ' -এর প্রথম সংস্করণের বিজ্ঞাপনে এরূপ মতবাদই ব্যক্ত করেছেন—"ইংরাজরা বাঙ্গালা দেশ অরাজকতা হইতে উদ্ধার করিয়াছে।"

কারণ যাহাই হউক, আবেগের বশবর্তী না হয়ে একথা বলা যায় যে ইংরাজ ও ইংরাজ-শাসনের প্রশস্তির মূলে ছিল—সুশাসনের ঐচ্ছিক-প্রত্যাশা ও পরাধীনতার গ্লানি ও কুফল সম্বন্ধে অদূরদর্শিতা।

বাঙ্গলার নাট্য-জগতে 'রঙ্গালয়ের স্রষ্টা' দীনবন্ধুর অবদান

নাট্যকার দীনবন্ধুর আবির্ভাব বা দীনবন্ধুর নাটকের আবির্ভাব বাংলার নাট্য-ইতিহাসের এক যুগসন্ধিক্ষণে। তদবধি, বাংলা নাটকের সংলাপের ভাষা ছিল শুদ্ধ ও সংস্কৃতাশ্রয়ী। রাজার সংলাপের ভাষা ও নিম্নবর্গের চরিত্রের সংলাপের ভাষায় বিশেষ পার্থক্য ছিল না। দীনবন্ধুর নাটকেই প্রথম ভাষা বাংলা হলেও, সংলাপে, চরিত্রানুযায়ী স্থানিকভাষা বা বাচনভঙ্গি (dialect) প্রবর্তিত হয়।

এই কারণে আমরা নীলদর্পণ-এ — একটি সম্পূর্ণ 'তোরাপ', আপাদমস্তক গ্রাম্য 'আদুরী', সীমিত-স্বাক্ষর 'সাধুচরণ' ও কালেজীয় শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত 'বিন্দুমাধব' এবং সধবার একাদশী-তে — ইংরাজিতে সুপণ্ডিত, পথভ্রান্ত একটি জীবন্ত 'নিমচাঁদ' ও 'বাণ্ডিল' (Brandy)-আসক্ত, বিক্রমপুরের বাঙ্গাল 'রামমাণিক্যকে' অবিকৃত রূপে পাই। এই প্রাণবন্ত চরিত্রগুলির জন্যই দীনবন্ধুর সামাজিক নাটকগুলিকে তৎকালীন সমাজ-জীবনের চালচিত্র বলা হয়। পরবর্তীকালে, বাংলা নাটকে যে ধারা অনুসৃত হয়, দীনবন্ধুই সেই ধারার পথিকৃৎ।

মধুসূদনের প্রহসন ছাড়া, সেই সময় বাংলার অপেশাদার রঙ্গালয়ে, পৌরাণিক কাহিনী-ভিত্তিক, ব্যয়বহুল পোষাক-পরিচ্ছদে ভারাক্রান্ত, নাটকই অভিনীত হত। এ কারণে মঞ্চে অভিনয়, বিত্তবান গোষ্ঠীর মধ্যে সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল বা ঐ গোষ্ঠীর পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা নির্ভর ছিল। সাধারণ মধ্যবিত্ত সমাজের পটভূমিকায় রচিত নীলদর্পণ, সধবার একাদশী ইত্যাদি নাটক এই আর্থ-বাধা দূর করে।

বাঙ্গলার সাধারণ রঙ্গালয়ের উদ্বোধনে নীলদর্পণ নাটকই অভিনীত হয়।

এ প্রসঙ্গে, বাঙ্গলার সাধারণ রঙ্গালয়ের পথিকৃৎ—নট, নাট্যকার ও প্রযোজক—গিরিশ চন্দ্রের "শাস্তি কি শান্তি" নাটকের উৎসর্গ-পত্র বিশেষ প্রাসঙ্গিক। দীনবন্ধু মিত্রকে 'নাট্যগুরু' সম্বোধন করে তিনি লিখেছেন—

> "বঙ্গে রঙ্গালয় স্থাপনের জন্য মহাশয় কর্ম্মক্ষেত্রে আসিয়াছিলেন। যে সময় সধবার একাদশী অভিনয় হয় সেই সময় ধনাঢ্য সাহায্য ব্যতীত নাটকাভিনয় করা একপ্রকার অসম্ভব হইত; কারণ, পরিচ্ছদ প্রভৃতির যেরূপ বিপুল ব্যয় হইত, তাহা নির্বাহ করা সাধারণের সাধ্যাতীত ছিল। কিন্তু আপনার সমাজচিত্র 'সধবার একাদশী' তে অর্থব্যয়ের প্রয়োজন হয় নাই। সেইজন্য সম্পত্তিহীন যুবকবৃন্দ মিলিয়া 'সধবার একাদশী' অভিনয় করিতে সক্ষম হয়। মহাশয়ের নাটক যদি না থাকিত, এই সকল যুবক মিলিয়া ন্যাশানাল থিয়েটর স্থাপন করিতে সাহস করিত না। এই নিমিত্ত আপনাকে রঙ্গালয়ের স্রষ্টা বলিয়া নমস্কার করি।"

বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের মতে—"তাঁহার প্রণীত নাটক সকলে যেরূপ চরিত্রবৈচিত্র্য আছে, তাহা বাঙ্গালা সাহিত্যে বিরল।" (১)

দীনবন্ধুর রচনার প্রকাশনা-ক্রমিক অনুসূচী

১। নীলদর্পণ — ১৮৬০

২। নবীন তপস্বিনী — ১৮৬৩

৩। বিয়ে পাগলা বুড়ো — ১৮৬৬

৪। সধবার একাদশী — ১৮৬৬

৫। লীলাবতী — ১৮৬৭

৬। সুরধুনী কাব্য

১ম ভাগ — প্রথম থেকে অষ্টম সর্গ — ১৮৭১

২য় ভাগ — নবম ও দশম সর্গ — মৃত্যুর পরে
দীনবন্ধুর পুত্রগণ কর্ত্তৃক প্রকাশিত — ১৮৭৬

৭। জামাই বারিক — ১৮৭২

৮। দ্বাদশ কবিতা — ১৮৭২

৯। কমলে কামিনী নাটক — ১৮৭৩

বিবিধ—গদ্য-পদ্য

তদানীন্তন সাময়িক পত্রপত্রিকায় বিক্ষিপ্তভাবে প্রকাশিত ও ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র গুপ্তের 'সংবাদ প্রভাকর' ও 'সংবাদ সাধুরঞ্জন'-এ প্রকাশিত এবং 'কালেজীয় কবিতা-যুদ্ধের জন্য লিখিত, কিছু গদ্য-পদ্যের সংকলন, বঙ্গীয়-সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ প্রকাশিত দীনবন্ধু গ্রন্থাবলীতে সংযোজিত আছে। ইহার মধ্যে নিম্নধৃত বারোটি কবিতা 'সংবাদ সাধুরঞ্জন', 'সংবাদ-প্রভাকর' ও 'বঙ্গদর্শন' থেকে সংগ্রহ করে দীনবন্ধুর পুত্ররা ১৮৮৬ খৃষ্টাব্দে 'পদ্য-সংগ্রহ' শিরোনামে প্রকাশ করেন—

১। মানব চরিত্র

২। সন্ধ্যার পূর্ব্বে সরোবরের শোভা

৩। নায়কের অনাগমে নায়িকার খেদ

৪। বসন্তের আগমনে সুমতি ও কুমতি সহচরীদ্বয় সহিত বিরহিনীর কথোপকথন

৫। বসন্তের আগমনে বিরহিনীর খেদ

৬। জনক জননীর স্নেহ (গদ্য/পদ্য)

৭। মাঘ মাসে প্রাতঃস্নান

৮। চন্দ্র

৯। দম্পতি প্রণয় বিজয় কামিনী

১০। জামাই ষষ্ঠী (প্রথম ও দ্বিতীয় বারের)

১১। লয়ান্টি লোটস্— অর্থাৎ রাজভক্তি শতদল

১২। প্রভাত

- গদ্য -

১। যমালয়ে জীবন্ত মানুষ (উপন্যাস) — 'বঙ্গদর্শন' কার্ত্তিক, ১২৭৯

২। পোড়া মহেশ্বর —'মধ্যস্থ', ১৮, ২৫ কার্ত্তিক ও ২রা অগ্রহায়ণ, ১২৭৯

৩। কুঁড়ে গরুর ভিন্ন গোঠ (নাটকাঙ্গিক) — বসুমতি-প্রকাশিত 'রায় দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের গ্রন্থাবলী' — ১৩০৮

উপরোক্ত তিনটি রচনার প্রথম প্রকাশনার তারিখ প্রাপ্তিসাধ্য নয়।

দীনবন্ধু-রচিত গান

দীনবন্ধু মূলত নাট্যকার হলেও, তিনি কিছু সঙ্গীতও রচনা করেছিলেন—বেশীরভাগই প্রেমবিষয়ক।(৮) কিন্তু সেইসব গান দীনবন্ধু-রচনার প্রকাশিত কোনও গ্রন্থে, বা গ্রন্থাবলীতে অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়নি। 'সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু' গ্রন্থের সাম্প্রতিক সংস্করণে (৮) চারটি গানের উল্লেখ আছে—

১। **ননদিনী বলে নাগরে .....** ২। **নীল বানরে সোনার বাংলা .....**

৩। **প্রাণ যায় প্রাণ যায় .....** ৪। **হে নিরদয় নীলকরগণ .....**

এবং

এই চারটি গান সম্বন্ধে নিম্নধৃত তথ্য উল্লিখিত আছে।

ননদিনী বলে নাগরে — রাগিণী—ঝিঁঝিট, তাল—মধ্যমান।

সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু গ্রন্থে এই গানের সঙ্গে রচয়িতার নাম—অপ্রকাশিত—থাকলেও, টিকা পর্যায় (প্রাসঙ্গিক তথ্য ও আলোচনা) উল্লিখিত আছে যে—'বিশ্বসঙ্গীত' ও 'সঙ্গীতকোষ' গ্রন্থে এই গানের রচয়িতার নাম—দীনবন্ধু মিত্র। আবার 'বাঙ্গালীর গান' ও 'ভারতীয় সঙ্গীতমুক্তাবলী' গ্রন্থে প্রকাশিত রচয়িতার নাম—দাশরথি রায়। (৮)

নীল বানরে সোনার বাংলা — 'সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু' গ্রন্থে, মূল গানের সঙ্গে প্রকাশিত রচয়িতার নাম—দীনবন্ধু মিত্র। এ সম্বন্ধে দ্বিমত আছে। ঐ গ্রন্থেরই টিকা পর্যায় উল্লিখিত আছে যে—'বিশ্বসঙ্গীত' গ্রন্থে, এই গানের রচয়িতার নাম—'বিদ্যাভূনী' এবং 'সঙ্গীত সহস্র' গ্রন্থে রচয়িতার নাম—অপ্রকাশিত। বঙ্গীয়-সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ প্রকাশিত নীলদর্পণ-এর ভূমিকায় এই গানটি 'বিদ্যাভূনী-কৃত' বলেই উল্লিখিত আছে। (৫) সুর সম্বন্ধে, প্রকাশিত সকল সংকলন গ্রন্থেই উল্লিখিত আছে—'কবির সুর'।

প্রাণ যায় প্রাণ যায় — রাগিণী—ঝিঁঝিট, তাল—একতালা।

'সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু' গ্রন্থ অনুসারে, এই গানটি দীনবন্ধু মিত্র রচিত। অবশ্য, টিকা পর্যায় উল্লিখিত আছে যে 'সঙ্গীত সহস্র' গ্রন্থে রচয়িতার নাম—অপ্রকাশিত। যেহেতু এ গানটি 'কমলে কামিনী' নাটকের অন্তর্ভুক্ত, সেকারণে রচয়িতা সম্বন্ধে মতান্তরের কোন অবকাশ নেই।

হে নিরদয় নীলকরগণ — রাগিণী—আড়ানা বাহার, তাল—তেওট।

'সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু' গ্রন্থে মূল গানের সঙ্গে প্রকাশিত রচয়িতার নাম—দ্বারকানাথ বিদ্যাভূষণ। * টিকা পর্যায় উল্লিখিত আছে যে—'ভারতীয় সঙ্গীতমুক্তাবলী', 'সঙ্গীতকোষ' ও 'বাঙ্গালীর গান' গ্রন্থে রচয়িতার নাম—দীনবন্ধু মিত্র এবং 'বিশ্বসঙ্গীত' গ্রন্থে—বিদ্যাভূনী। অধ্যাপক

পুলিন দাস তাঁর নীলবৃত্তান্ত গ্রন্থে (৪) রচয়িতার নাম উল্লেখ করেছেন—'বিদ্যাভূনী'। 'বাংলা কাব্য - সঙ্গীত ও রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত' গ্রন্থে, অরুণকুমার বসু লিখেছেন—'গানটি যেহেতু নীলদর্পণের ২য় সংস্করণে প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল, সেজন্য কোনো কোনো গীতসংকলনকার রচনাটি দীনবন্ধুর নামে প্রচার করেছেন। আর গানটির অপর রচয়িতা—-বিদ্যাভূনী-র—নামটি 'বিশ্বসঙ্গীত' ছাড়া অন্যত্র পাওয়া যায় না। 'বিদ্যাভূষণ'-ই * 'বিদ্যাভূনী'-তে পরিণত হয়েছে কিনা বলা দুষ্কর।' (৮)

'সঙ্গীত সহস্র', 'ভারতীয় সঙ্গীতমুক্তাবলী (১ম খন্ড)', 'গীতরত্নমালা (১ম খন্ড)', 'সঙ্গীতকোষ', 'প্রীতিগীতি', 'সঙ্গীতসার সংগ্রহ (২য় খন্ড)', 'বিশ্বসঙ্গীত' —এই গীতসংকলনগুলিতে দীনবন্ধু রচিত ১৩ টি গানের ** উল্লেখ আছে। (৮) এই নিবন্ধে শুধু 'সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু'-তে উল্লিখিত চারটি গান সম্বন্ধে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে।

** **'কমলে কামিনী'** নাটকে, 'প্রাণ যায় প্রাণ যায়' গানটি ছাড়া আরও দু'টি গান আছে—'কি হেরিলাম আহা মরি' (সুর — খাম্বাজ, তাল — কাওয়ালী) ও 'কি হল কাহাকে জিজ্ঞাসিব বল' (সুর — খাম্বাজ, তাল — একতালা)। দীনবন্ধুর অন্যান্য নাটকের গানগুলি — **লীলাবতী** — 'নেশার রাজা, মদের মজা' (রাগিণী—শঙ্করা, তাল—আড়খেমটা) — 'কামিনী কোমল মনে বিরহ কি যাতনা' (রাগিণী—ভৈরবী, তাল—আড়ঠেকা), **জামাই বারিক** — 'মার দম্ কসে দম্ গাঁজার কল্‌কে তুলে' (দ্বিতীয় জামাই-এর গাঁজা টানিয়া গীত — বাউলের সুর, তাল—একতালা) — 'মনের মত নাগর যদি পাই' (রাগ—সিন্ধু কাগি, তাল—খেমটা)।

বিষয়

নীলদর্পণ নাটক

পৃষ্ঠা

রচনা ও প্রকাশনা —

নীলদর্পণ-এর রচনাকাল ১৮৫৮ খৃষ্টাব্দের কোন এক সময়। (৯) এই যুগান্তকারী নাটকটি প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয়—২, আশ্বিন, ১৭৮২ শকাব্দ / ১২৬৭ বঙ্গাব্দ— ১৯ শে সেপ্টেম্বর, ১৮৬০ খৃষ্টাব্দ। (২) রচনাকাল ও প্রকাশনার মধ্যে সময়ের ব্যবধান, মনে হয়, প্রকাশনায় প্রারম্ভিক গোপনীয়তা, প্রস্তুতি ও সতর্কতার কারণে। নাটকটি ঢাকা থেকে শ্রীরামচন্দ্র ভৌমিক কর্তৃক বাঙ্গলা যন্ত্রে মুদ্রিত ও প্রকাশিত। এই প্রকাশনায় গ্রন্থকারের নাম উল্লিখিত ছিল না — নাটকটির রচনার উদ্দেশ্যে ইঙ্গিতে লেখা ছিল—

"নীলকর-বিষধর-দংশন কাতর-প্রজানিকর
ক্ষেমঙ্করেণ কেনচিৎ পথিকেনাভিপ্রণীতং।"

ভূমিকার লেখক হিসাবে মুদ্রিত ছিল — "কস্যচিত পথিকস্য"। কিন্তু নীলদর্পণ প্রচারের পরেই, বাংলাদেশে সকলেই কোন প্রকারে না কোন প্রকারে জানতে পারে যে — সেই 'পথিকটি' — দীনবন্ধু মিত্র।

প্রকাশিত গ্রন্থে, নাম গোপনের সতর্কতার বিশ্লেষণে বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র লিখেছেন— "দীনবন্ধু বিলক্ষণ জানিতেন যে, তিনি যে নীল-দর্পণের প্রণেতা, একথা ব্যক্ত হইলে, তাঁহার অনিষ্ট ঘটিবার সম্ভাবনা। যে সকল ইংরাজের অধীন হইয়া তিনি কর্ম্ম করিতেন, তাহারা নীলকরের সুহৃদ। বিশেষ, পোষ্ট অপিসের কার্য্যে নীলকর প্রভৃতি অনেক ইংরেজের সংস্পর্শে সর্ব্বদা আসিতে হয়। তাহারা শত্রুতা করিলে বিশেষ অনিষ্ট করিতে পারুক না পারুক, সর্ব্বদা উদ্বিগ্ন করিতে পারে। এ সকল জানিয়াও দীনবন্ধু নীল-দর্পণ প্রচারে পরাংমুখ হয়েন নি। .... নীল-দর্পণে গ্রন্থকারের নাম ছিল না বটে, কিন্তু গ্রন্থকারের নাম গোপন করিবার জন্য অন্য কোন প্রকার যত্ন করেন নাই।" (১) দীনবন্ধুর জীবিতকালেই বিভিন্ন স্থান থেকে নীলদর্পণ-এর বহু সংস্করণ প্রকাশিত হয়।

ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদ — মূল বাংলা নাটকটি, ১৮৬১খৃষ্টাব্দে, মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত কর্তৃক ইংরাজিতে অনূদিত হয়। (১) কারও কারও মতে দীনবন্ধু স্বয়ং নাকি বইটি রেভারেণ্ড লঙ-কে পড়ে দেখার জন্য দিয়েছিলেন। (৪) 'নীলবিদ্রোহ ও বাঙালী সমাজ'-গ্রন্থে, প্রমোদ রঞ্জন সেনগুপ্ত লিখেছেন—"কথিত আছে যে ডেপুটি ম্যজিষ্ট্রেট্ তারক নাথ ঘোষের ঝামাপুকুরস্থ বাড়ীতে বসে মধুসূদন একরাত্রের মধ্যে নীলদর্পণের অনুবাদ শেষ করেছিলেন।" (৪) এই তথ্যের কিছু ব্যতিক্রম লক্ষ্য করা যায় বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ প্রকাশিত ভারতকোষ (পঞ্চম খন্ড, ২৮১ পৃষ্ঠা) গ্রন্থে — 'কলিকাতায় ৬ নং আপার চিৎপুর রোডে বসবাসকালে ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দে তিনি লঙ সাহেবকে নীলদর্পণের অনুবাদ করিয়া দেন।' হরফ প্রকাশনী

প্রকাশিত (২১ শে আগষ্ট, ১৯৭৩), মধুসূদন রচনাবলীতে 'Nil Darpan' মধুসূদনের ইংরাজি রচনাবলীর পঞ্জির অন্তর্গত। বিংশ শতাব্দীর সাতের দশকে প্রকাশিত, জেফ্রি এ ওডি তাঁর প্রোটেষ্টেন্ট্ মিশনারীদের সম্বন্ধে লেখা গ্রন্থে, রেভ: জেমস্ লঙ-এর দুইটি চিঠির উল্লেখ করে সুস্পষ্টভাবে লিখেছেন—মাইকেল জেমস্ লঙের তত্ত্বাবধানে নীলদর্পণ অনুবাদ করেছিলেন।

ইংরাজিতে অনূদিত গ্রন্থেও গ্রন্থকারের নাম ইঙ্গিতে উল্লিখিত হয় — 'by A NATIVE'। ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদিত গ্রন্থে যদিও 'প্রকাশক'-এর নাম উল্লিখিত ছিল না, তবে আইন মোতাবেক, মুদ্রাকরের নাম ছিল · সি. এইচ. ম্যানুয়েল।

অনুবাদক সম্বন্ধে বিতর্ক — নীলদর্পণ-এর ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদক কে, এ বিষয়ে বিতর্ক আছে। পূর্ববর্তীকালে না থাকলেও, বিংশ শতাব্দীর সাতের দশকে, অধ্যাপক তপোবিজয় ঘোষ, গোলাম মুরশিদ প্রমুখ এবং অন্যান্য কয়েকজন সাহিত্য-সমালোচকের মতে নীলদর্পণ-এর অনুবাদক মাইকেল মধুসূদন নন। গোলাম মুরশিদ জেফ্রি এ ওডির তথ্য গ্রহণ করতে রাজি নন—তাঁর নিজের তথ্যের ভিত্তিতে। (১৩) এই যুক্তি-তর্কের একটি বিশেষ চরিত্র আছে। ইতিবাচকের প্রবক্তারা সুস্পষ্টভাবেই বলেছেন যে—'মাইকেল নীলদর্পণের ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদক'। অপরদিকে নেতিবাচক সমালোচকেরা তাঁদের নিজস্ব যুক্তি নির্ভর মন্তব্যে শুধু একথাই বলেছেন যে 'মাইকেলই অনুবাদক'—এ সম্বন্ধে যথেষ্ট সন্দেহ আছে এবং চূড়ান্তভাবে সে কথা বলা যায় না। কিন্তু তাঁদের বীক্ষণে প্রকৃত অনুবাদক কে, সে সম্বন্ধে কোনও যুক্তিনির্ভর অনুমানেরও উল্লেখ নেই।

এই বিতর্কের আড়ালে একটি বিশেষ প্রাসঙ্গিক প্রশ্নের উত্তর সম্পূর্ণভাবে ঢাকা পড়ে গেছে। ইংরাজিতে প্রকাশনা (১৮৬১ খৃঃ) থেকে দীর্ঘ বারো বছর (১৮৭৩ খৃঃ) মধুসূদন জীবিত ছিলেন। কিন্তু এই দীর্ঘ সময়ে যখন বঙ্গসমাজ নীলদর্পণ-সৃষ্ট আলোড়নে উদ্বেলিত এবং তিনিই এই নাটকের ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদক, এ বিশ্বাস প্রচলিত — মাইকেল মধুসূদন নিজেই কেন তা অস্বীকার বা প্রতিবাদ করেন নি; সেই স্বীকারোক্তিতে তাঁর বা বাঙ্গলার সাহিত্য জগতের কোনও ক্ষতির সম্ভাবনা যখন ছিল না। এই প্রসঙ্গে, আর একটি প্রশ্নও স্বাভাবিকভাবে এসে পড়ে — রেভঃ লঙ-ই বা কেন অস্বীকার বা প্রতিবাদ করেননি।

রেভারেণ্ড জেমস্ লঙ নীলদর্পণ-এর ইংরাজি অনুবাদ প্রকাশ করেন এবং প্রচারনিমিত্ত ইংলণ্ডের উচ্চমহলে পাঠিয়ে দেন। "নীলদর্পণ ইউরোপের অনেক ভাষায় অনুবাদিত ও পঠিত হইয়াছিল। এই সৌভাগ্য বাঙ্গালায় আর কোন গ্রন্থেরই ঘটে নাই।" (১)

বিঘ্ন — দুর্ভাগ্যবশতঃ, যে সকল ব্যক্তি নীলদর্পণ-এর সঙ্গে কোন না কোন সূত্রে যুক্ত ছিলেন, প্রায় তাঁহারা সকলেই কিছু না কিছু বিপদগ্রস্ত হয়েছিলেন—জেমস্ লঙ ইংরাজি অনুবাদ প্রকাশ ও প্রচার করে কারারুদ্ধ হন, 'ইণ্ডিগো কমিশন'-এর সভাপতি ও বেঙ্গল গভর্নমেন্টের সেক্রেটারী 'সীটনকার'-এর মত উচ্চপদস্থ রাজপুরুষ বিশেষ অপদস্থ হন, মূল গ্রন্থের ইংরাজিতে অনুবাদের জন্য মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত গোপনে তিরস্কৃত ও অপমানিত হন এবং 'শেষে তাঁহার জীবন নির্ব্বাহের উপায় সুপ্রীম কোর্টের চাকরীতে পর্য্যন্ত ইস্তফা দিতে বাধ্য হন।' (১), (২)

রচনাকালে মেঘনা-বিপর্যয় — "একদিন রাত্রে নীল-দর্পণ লিখিতে লিখিতে দীনবন্ধু মেঘনা পার হইতেছিলেন। কূল হইতে প্রায় দুই ক্রোশ দূরে গেলে নৌকা হঠাৎ জলমগ্ন হইতে লাগিল। দাঁড়ী মাঝি সকলেই সন্তরণ আরম্ভ করিল;দীনবন্ধু তাহাতে অক্ষম। দীনবন্ধু নীল-দর্পণ হস্তে করিয়া জলমজ্জনোন্মুখ নৌকায় নিস্তব্ধে বসিয়া রহিলেন। এমন সময় হঠাৎ একজন সন্তরণকারীর পদ মৃত্তিকা স্পর্শ করিলে সে সকলকে ডাকিয়া বলিল, "ভয় নাই, এখানে জল অল্প, নিকটে অবশ্য চর আছে।" বাস্তব নিকটে চর ছিল, তথায় নৌকা আনীত হইয়া চরলগ্ন হইলে দীনবন্ধু উঠিয়া নৌকার ছাদের উপর বসিয়া রহিলেন। তখনও সে আর্দ্র নীল-দর্পণ, তাঁহার হস্তে রহিয়াছে। এই সময় মেঘনায় ভাঁটা বহিতেছিল, সত্বরেই জোয়ার আসিয়া এই চর ডুবিয়া যাইবে এবং সে সঙ্গে এই জলপূর্ণ ভগ্নতরি ভাসিয়া যাইবে; তখন জীবনরক্ষার উপায় কি হইবে; এই ভাবনা দাঁড়ী, মাঝি সকলেই ভাবিতেছিল, দীনবন্ধুও ভাবিতে ছিলেন। তখন রাত্রি গভীর, আবার ঘোর অন্ধকার; চারিদিকে বেগবতীর বিষম স্রোতধ্বনি, কদাচিৎ মধ্যে মধ্যে নিশাচর পক্ষীদিগের চীৎকার। জীবনরক্ষার কোন উপায় না দেখিয়া দীনবন্ধু একেবারে নিরাশ্বাস হইতেছিলেন, এমত সময়ে দূরে দাঁড়ের শব্দ শুনা গেল। সকলেই উচ্চৈঃস্বরে পুনঃ পুনঃ ডাকিবায় দূরবর্ত্তী নৌকারোহীরা উত্তর দিল, এবং সত্বরে আসিয়া দীনবন্ধু ও তৎসমভিব্যাহারীদিগের উদ্ধার করিল।" (১)

"এই বর্ণনা পাঠ করিয়া ইণ্ডিগো কমিশনের ভূতপূর্ব্ব সভাপতি, সীটনকার সাহেব চমৎকৃত হইয়া সুবিখ্যাত "সাহিত্য" পত্রিকার সম্পাদককে লিখিয়াছিলেন — "It seemed that Baruna Deva saved his life" (বোধহয়, বরুণদেব তাঁহার জীবন রক্ষা করিয়াছিলেন)।(৭) সীটনকার সাহেবের এই মন্তব্যের সঙ্গে একটি বহুপ্রচলিত কথ্যভাষায় প্রবচন—'রাখে কেষ্ট, মারে কে?' — সংযোজন করা যেতে পারে।

নীলদর্পণ নাটকের ঘটনা ও চরিত্রগুলি বাস্তবিক না কাল্পনিক?

বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র লিখেছেন—"দীনবন্ধু অনেক সময়েই শিক্ষিত ভাস্কর বা চিত্রকরের ন্যায় জীবিত আদর্শ সম্মুখে রাখিয়া চরিত্রগুলি গঠিতেন।" (১) কোনও সুস্পষ্ট ঐতিহাসিক প্রমাণ না থাকলেও, গবেষকদের মতে ও সমকালীন ব্যক্তিদের অনুমানে, নাটকের প্রায় প্রতিটি ঘটনা এবং বিশেষ কয়টি চরিত্র বাস্তব-ভিত্তিক। এই প্রসঙ্গে কয়েকটি দৃষ্টান্ত উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে।

- "নদীয়ার অন্তর্গত গুয়াতালির মিত্র পরিবারের দুর্দ্দশা নীলদর্পণের উপাখ্যানটির ভিত্তিভূমি।"—ভারত-সংস্কার পত্রিকা—৭.১১.১৮৭৩, সম্পাদকীয়। (৫)
- "বাঁশবেড়িয়ার কুঠি' ও 'কৃষ্ণনগর', নাটকে উল্লিখিত হয়েছে, যথাক্রমে—'বেগুনবেড়ের কুঠি' ও 'অমরনগর' নামে। (২), (৪), (১১)
- নাটকে বেগুনবেড়ের কুঠির গুদামঘরে মৃত্যুপথযাত্রী 'মজুমদার', বাস্তবে বাঁশবেড়িয়া কুঠিতে দৈহিকপীড়নে নিহত (জুলাই, ১৮৫৯), গাঁতিদার 'শীতল তরফদারের' প্রতিরূপ। (৪)
- 'হরমণি হরণের' ঘটনা, নাটকে রোগসাহেবের কামরায় 'ক্ষেত্রমণির' লাঞ্ছনার দৃশ্যে প্রতিফলিত। (২), (৪)
- নাটকের 'গোলক বসুর বিচারক, ইন্দ্রাবাদ ফৌজদারী কাছারীর ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটের' চরিত্রটি, যশোরের 'ম্যালোনী' বা 'স্পীনার' অথবা 'ডুমুরহুদার বেট্‌সের' কথাই মনে করিয়ে দেয়। (২), (৪)
- নাটকে মোক্তার তার সওয়ালে জানায় — "নবীন মাধব বসু করাল নীলকর নিশাচরের কর হইতে উপায়হীন চাষাদিগের রক্ষা করিতে প্রাণপণে যত্ন করিয়া থাকেন ....।" বাস্তবে, ঠিক এইভাবেই কৃষকদের পাশে দাঁড়ান — চৌগাছার দুই ভাই, বিষ্ণুচরণ বিশ্বাস ও দিগম্বর বিশ্বাস—এ কাহিনী জানা যায় 'হিন্দু প্যাট্রিয়ট'-এ শিশির কুমার ঘোষের বিবরণ থেকে। (২)
- ১৮৬০ খৃষ্টাব্দে নদীয়ার ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট, সিভিলিয়ন 'ডব্লু. জে. হার্সল', নাটকে, নবীনমাধবের— "অমরনগরের নিরপেক্ষ ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট"। তিনি বিখ্যাত জোতির্বিদ, 'স্যার উলিয়ম হার্সল'-এর পৌত্র, সে কারণে নাটকের সংলাপে তাঁকে—"বড় মানুষের ছাওয়াল" বলে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। (২), (৭)
- 'শ্যামচাঁদ' (নামান্তরে 'রামকান্ত') — নীলদর্পণে নীলকরদের আবিষ্কৃত এই দৈহিকপীড়নের হাতিয়ারটির উল্লেখ আছে, কিন্তু ইহার আকার ও আয়তনের কোন বিবরণ নাই।

গিরিশ চন্দ্র বসু — যিনি ১৮৫৩-৬০ খৃষ্টাব্দ পর্যন্ত নবদ্বীপ-শান্তিপুর-কৃষ্ণনগর প্রভৃতি নীল অধ্যুষিত এলাকায় পুলিশের দারোগা হিসাবে কর্মরত ছিলেন এবং যিনি নীল কমিশনের কৃষ্ণনগর অধিবেশনে সাক্ষ্য দেন ও 'শ্যামচাঁদের' নমুনা প্রদর্শন করেন — পরবর্তীকালে, এই কুখ্যাত বিশেষ চাবুকটির বর্ণনায় লিখেছেন—

> " .... কোনও স্থানে একটি লাঠির অগ্রভাগে একহাত দীর্ঘ এবং অর্ধহাত প্রস্থ খুব শক্ত এবং মোটা চর্মের একখানা হাতা এবং কোনস্থানে হাতার পরিবর্তে অগ্রভাগে গ্রন্থিযুক্ত কয়েক ছড়া চর্ম্মের রজ্জু বান্ধা থাকিত।"(৪)

অন্যত্র, নীলকর আবিষ্কৃত এই চাবুকটির যে বর্ণনা পাওয়া যায়—

> "Not content with the usual instrument of torture and punishment, one of the planters invented a novel form of a whip or Cat-O'-nine-tails*, christned 'Sham Chand' or 'Ram Kant', for beating out of the raiyats any lurking disinclination against cultivation of the plant. The authorship of this was ascribed to Mr. Larmour, the leading planter of Bengal"—
>
> — Hara Chandra Chakladar—"Fifty years ago". (৫), (২)

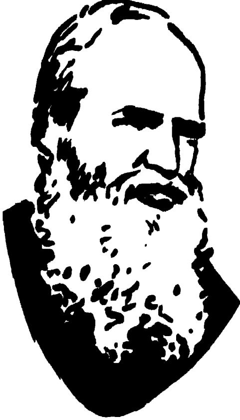
এই সকল চরিত্র ও ঘটনার বাস্তবিকতার জন্যই নীলদর্পণ শুধু একটি নাটকই নয়, নীলদর্পণ বাঙ্গলার গ্রাম্য ও কৃষিজীবনের এক অশান্ত সময়ের প্রামাণিক ইতিহাসও বটে।

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* "An instrument of punishment, so called from the nine pieces of leather or cord which compose it". — CLAREMONT - Dictionery of Phrase & Fable. (p. 40)

রেভারেণ্ড্ জেম্‌স্ লঙ্ ও নীলদর্পণ সংক্রান্ত মামলা

রেভারেণ্ড্ জেম্‌স্ লঙ — অত্যাচারিত ও অবহেলিত কৃষকদের প্রতি অকৃত্রিম সহানুভূতিশীল এক আইরিশ্ পাদরী — এই গ্রন্থের বিষয়বস্তু প্রসঙ্গে, ইহাই তাঁহার সঠিক পরিচয়। বিবেকের তাড়নায় কয়েকটি পদক্ষেপের জন্য তিনি বিশেষ লাঞ্ছিত হন এবং শেষ পর্য্যন্ত কারাদণ্ডে দণ্ডিত হন।



যে 'ইণ্ডিগো কমিশন' নীলচাষ সম্বন্ধে তদন্ত করে নীলকরদের বিরুদ্ধে, তিনি সেই কমিশনের সামনে কৃষকদের পক্ষে সাক্ষ্য দেন। পরবর্তীকালে, নীলদর্পণ-এর ইংরাজি অনুবাদের প্রকাশক হিসাবে, তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে আনীত মামলায়, কলিকাতা সুপ্রীম কোর্টে তিনি অভিযুক্ত হন এবং বিচারে তাঁর এক হাজার টাকা জরিমানা ও একমাস বিনাশ্রম কারাদণ্ড হয়। প্রকাশ্য আদালতে দণ্ডিত হলেও, নীলদর্পণ-এর অনুবাদ প্রকাশনার জন্য এই দৃঢ়চেতা, নির্ভীক ধর্ম্মযাজকের কোনও অনুতাপ ছিল না। আদালতে. বিচারকের রায় শোনার পর, তাঁকে প্রকাশ্যে বলতে শোনা যায় — "আমি এখন যা করিয়াছি, তাহা আমি আবার করিব" (What I have done now, I will do again)। (২)

এই কৃষকবন্ধু, মহানুভব রেভারেণ্ড্ জেম্‌স্ লঙ-কে বাঙ্গালী ভোলেনি। আমহার্ষ্ট ষ্ট্রীটস্থ (অধুনা রামমোহন সরণি) সেন্ট্ পল্‌স্ কলেজ সংলগ্ন গীর্জ্জাটি আজও 'লঙ সাহেবের গীর্জ্জা' নামে খ্যাত। কলিকাতা পৌর প্রতিষ্ঠান, বেহালার একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ রাস্তার নাম রেখেছে—'জেম্‌স্ লঙ সরণি'।

নীলদর্পণ সংক্রান্ত মামলা — মাইকেল মধুসূদন-কৃত নীলদর্পণ নাটকের ইংরাজি অনুবাদ প্রকাশিত হয়—এপ্রিল-মে, ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দে। গ্রন্থের নামপত্রে মুদ্রাকর হিসাবে শুধু সি. এইচ. ম্যানুয়েলের নাম মুদ্রিত ছিল, প্রকাশকের নাম ছিল না এবং রচয়িতার নাম মুদ্রিত ছিল — 'By A NATIVE'।

নীলকরদের সংগঠন — 'ল্যাণ্ডহোল্ডার অ্যাণ্ড কমার্শিয়াল অ্যাসোসিয়েশন অব ইণ্ডিয়া', সি. এইচ. ম্যানুয়েলের বিরুদ্ধে সুপ্রীম কোর্টে একটি মামলা দায়ের করে। এই মামলার শুনানীর প্রারম্ভেই, লঙ-এর নির্দেশে, ম্যানুয়েল আদালতে লঙ-এর নাম প্রকাশক হিসাবে জানান। তখন, সামান্য ১০ টাকা জরিমানা করে ম্যানুয়েলকে মুক্তি দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু

'ইংলিশম্যান' পত্রিকার সম্পাদক, ওয়াল্টার ব্রেট্, ১৯ শে জুলাই, ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দে, সুপ্রীম কোর্টে রেভঃ লঙ-এর বিরুদ্ধে একটি মামলা দায়ের করেন। তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ— নীলদর্পণ-এর ইংরাজি অনুবাদের ভূমিকায় তিনি নীলকরদের সমর্থক দু'টি সংবাদ পত্রের — 'ইংলিশম্যান' ও 'বেঙ্গল হরকরা' — সম্পাদকদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রত্যক্ষভাবে এবং প্রকারান্তরে ইংরাজ নীলকরদের সম্বন্ধে উদ্দেশ্য-প্রণোদিত, বিদ্বেষপূর্ণ ও মানহানিকর মন্তব্য প্রচার করেছেন। ইহাই নীলদর্পণ সংক্রান্ত মূল মামলা।

আদালতে রেভঃ লঙ শুধু এই অভিযোগ অস্বীকারই করেননি, তাঁর উদ্দেশ্য ব্যক্ত করার প্রসঙ্গে স্পষ্ট ভাষায় বলেন যে তাঁর প্রচেষ্টা কুৎসা রটনার জন্য ত নয়ই, বরং নিম্নমানের এই ইংরাজ সম্প্রদায় (নীলকর) বস্তুত ইংরাজ শাসনের কি ভয়ঙ্কর ক্ষতি করছে তা দেশে, বিদেশে (ইংলণ্ডে), পার্লামেন্টের সদস্য, সাংবাদিক, অবসরপ্রাপ্ত উচ্চপদস্থ সরকারী কর্ম্মচারী—অর্থাৎ, সুশিক্ষিত ও সমাজে সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত ইংরাজ সম্প্রদায়ের দৃষ্টিগোচরে আনাই তাঁর প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য।

এই মামলার প্রধান বিচারক ছিলেন 'নেটিভ বিদ্বেষী' কুখ্যাত 'মরডান্ট ওয়েল্‌স্'। ১২ জন ইংরাজ, ১ জন পর্তুগিজ, ১ জন আর্মেনীয় ও ১ জন ভারতীয় পার্শি—এই পনরোজন 'জুরী'-র সামনে তিন দিন — ১৯, ২০ ও ২৪ শে জুলাই, ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দ — কলিকাতা সুপ্রীম কোর্টে শুনানী হয়। এই বিচার-প্রহসন শেষে, জুরীগণ রেভঃ লঙ-কে সর্ব্বসম্মতভাবে দোষী সাব্যস্ত করে। ২৪ শে জুলাই, ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দ, বিচারকের রায়ে রেভঃ লঙ-এর এক হাজার টাকা জরিমানা ও একমাসের বিনাশ্রম কারাদণ্ড হয়। এই মামলা চলাকালে নীলদর্পণ-এর প্রকৃত লেখক দীনবন্ধু মিত্রসহ, শহরের বহু বিশিষ্ট ব্যক্তি আদালতে উপস্থিত থাকতেন। "মহামতি কালীপ্রসন্ন সিংহ স্বয়ং বিচারালয়ে উপস্থিত থাকিয়া, জরিমানার হাজার টাকা আদালতে প্রদান করেন।" (২), (৭) ৩০ হাজার স্বাক্ষর সহ এক প্রশস্তি, রেভঃ জেম্‌স্ লঙ-এব কাছে কারাগারে প্রেরিত হয়। ইহার মাধ্যমে 'কলিকাতাবাসীর, তথা সমগ্র বাঙ্গালী সমাজের, আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও প্রশংসা নির্ঝরের ন্যায় স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত্তভাবে ঝরিয়া পড়ে।' (২)

বাঙ্গালীর 'ট্রাডিশন' অনুযায়ী, তার মনের গভীর আবেগ, গ্রামে, গঞ্জে, শহরে, লোকগীতির মাধ্যমে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। একদিকে যেমন কৃষকবন্ধু পাদরি লঙ-এর প্রশস্তিতে গান বাঁধা হয়—

১। "নীল বানরে সোনার বংলা কল্লে এবার ছারেখার।
অসময়ে হরিশ মলো, লঙ-এর হল কারাগার ....। (৫), (৮)

বা

২। "নীলদর্পণে লঙ সাহেব যথার্থ যা তাই লিখেছে
নীলে নীলে সব নিলে প্রজার বল ভাই কি রেখেছে ....।"
(সুর — সুরট মল্লার — তাল - আর ঠেকা) (৪), (৫), (৮)

অন্যদিকে, নীলকরদের চাটুকার ও একান্ত সুহৃদ 'পাদরি হিল' সম্বন্ধে ধিক্কারজনক ছড়া / গানও শোনা যায় —

৩। "জমিনের শত্রু নীল
কর্মের শত্রু ঢিল
তেমনি জাতের শত্রু পাদরি হিল।" (২), (৪)

এই বিচার-প্রহসনের রায় সম্বন্ধে, লোক-কবি ধীরাজের রচনা—

৪। "ওয়েল্স্, পিকক, জাকসনে, বসিয়া বিচারাসনে,
লংয়ের হাজার টাকা ফাইন করেছে
সিংহবাবু দয়াগুণে হাজার টাকা দিল গুণে,
ওয়ালটার ব্রেট তাই তাক হয়েছে।" (৪), (৫), (৮)

তথ্যের সম্পূর্ণতার জন্য এই গানগুলি সম্বন্ধে কিছু ব্যাখ্যার প্রয়োজন আছে।

১। এই গানটি বিস্তারিতভাবে আলোচিত হয়েছে এই নিবন্ধের 'দীনবন্ধু রচিত গান' পর্যায়।

২। এই গানটির রচয়িতার নাম—বঙ্গীয়-সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ প্রকাশিত নীলদর্পণের ভূমিকায় উল্লিখিত আছে—'ধীরাজ-কৃত'। সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু গ্রন্থে, যদিও মূল গানের সঙ্গে রচয়িতার নাম উল্লিখিত আছে—'ধীরাজ-কৃত', ঐ গ্রন্থেরই টিকা পর্যায় উল্লিখিত আছে যে — 'সঙ্গীতকোষ'-এ রচয়িতার নাম—অক্রূর চন্দ্র সেন। "কারো কারো মতে—'ধীরাজ' দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের ছদ্মনাম।" (৮)

৪। গানটির এই অংশের পাঠভেদ এইরূপ —
বঙ্গীয়-সাহিত্য-পরিষৎ প্রকাশিত নীলদর্পণের ভূমিকায় (৫) এবং 'নীলবৃত্তান্তে' (৪) —

'ওয়াল্টার ব্রেট তাই তাক হয়েছে'

সঙ্গীতকল্পতরু গ্রন্থে (৮) —

'ওয়ালটার ব্রেট তায় তাকে পেয়েছে।'

নীলদর্পণ নাটক ও নাট্যকার সম্বন্ধে প্রশস্তি ও বিদ্রূপ

নীলদর্পণ নাটকের মূল্যায়নে এবং নাট্যকারের অবদান সম্বন্ধে নিম্নধৃত কয়েকটি তথ্য ও উদ্ধৃতি বিশেষ তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ।

— *প্রশস্তি* —

- ভারতীয় সঙ্গীতমুক্তাবলী ১ম (বিবিধ—রায় দীনবন্ধু মিত্র বাহাদুরের মৃত্যু উপলক্ষে), সঙ্গীতকোষ (বিবিধ সঙ্গীত), বিশ্বসঙ্গীত (ব্যক্তিগত বিষয়ক সঙ্গীত) (৮) —

"দীনবন্ধু মিত্র

রাগিনী বাগেশ্রী — তাল আড়ঠেকা

দীনবন্ধু দুখিনী বঙ্গের ভাগ্যে এত দুঃখ লিখেছিলে
বঙ্গের উজ্জ্বল মণি, কবিকুল চূড়ামণি, সেই দীনবন্ধু হায়!
কোথায় রহিলে॥
যাঁহার লিপি কৌশলে, দেখাইতে রঙ্গস্থলে,
নব নব সুনাটক বঙ্গীয় কুলে
লেখনী কৌশলে যার, প্রীতিময় সবাকার,
সেই দীনবন্ধু হায় শমন কোলে।
চির নবীনা কামিনী, স্বালঙ্কারা তপস্বিনী,
ভাসে এবে অনাথিনী নয়ন জলে॥"

রচয়িতা — অজ্ঞাত

- *বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়* —

  "নীলদর্পণ বাঙ্গালার Uncle Tom's Cabin." (১)

  "তিনি নীলদর্পণ প্রণয়ন করিয়া বঙ্গীয় প্রজাগণকে অপরিশোধনীয় ঋণে বদ্ধ করিলেন।" (১)

- *শিবনাথ শাস্ত্রী* —

  " .... দূরেই বা যাই কেন, আমাদের স্মৃতিকালের মধ্যে এ বঙ্গদেশে জাতীয় সাহিত্যের

সাহায্যে মহাউদ্দীপনার অবতারণা আমরা দেখিয়াছি।.... যখন মানুষের মন এইরূপ উত্তেজিত, তখন দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের সু-প্রসিদ্ধ 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটক প্রকাশিত হইল। নাটকখানি বঙ্গসমাজে কি মহাউদ্দীপনার আবির্ভাব করিয়াছিল তাহা আমরা কখনও ভুলিব না। আবাল-বৃদ্ধ-বণিতা আমরা সকলে ক্ষিপ্তপ্রায় হইয়া গিয়াছিলাম। ঘরে ঘরে সেই কথা, বাসাতে বাসাতে তাহার অভিনয়। ভূমিকম্পের ন্যায় বঙ্গদেশের সীমা হইতে সীমান্ত পর্য্যন্ত কাঁপিয়া যাইতে লাগিল। এই মহাউদ্দীপনার ফল স্বরূপ নীলকরের অত্যাচার জন্মের মত বঙ্গদেশ হইতে বিদায় লইল।" — 'জাতীয় সাহিত্য ও জাতীয় উদ্দীপনা' — (২), (৭)

রসরাজ অমৃতলাল বসু —

পরবর্তী প্রজন্মের শিল্পীদের নীলদর্পণ নাটকের অভিনয়ে উদ্বুদ্ধ করতে, ১৮৯৮ খৃষ্টাব্দে, নীলদর্পণ নাটকের পুনঃ অভিনয়ের উদ্বোধনের প্রাক্কালে তিনি বলেন—

'সৌভাগ্যবশতঃ যে মূল কারণে সেই দুর্ভাগ্যজনক পরিস্থিতির উদ্ভব হইয়াছিল, তাহা আজ অতীতের কথা, কিন্তু ইহার (নীলদর্পণ) অন্তঃনিহিত উত্তম নাট্যগুণ ও গ্রাম বাংলার গৃহস্থলীর নিখুঁত দৃশ্য-প্রাচুর্য্য ইহাকে অত্যুত্তম সাহিত্যের মর্য্যাদায় উন্নীত করিয়াছে এবং যতদিন বাঙ্গালা ভাষা বাঁচিয়া থাকিবে ততদিন ইহাও আদৃত হইবে।'

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর —

"য়ুরোপের কোনো কোনো লেখক শ্রমজীবীদের দুঃখের কথা লিখেছেন, কিন্তু সেটা যে ব্যক্তি লিখেছে সেই লিখেছে। দীনবন্ধু মিত্র লিখেছিলেন নীলদর্পণ নাটক, দীনবন্ধু মিত্রই তার সৃষ্টিকর্তা। ওর মধ্যে যুগের তকমাটাই সাহিত্যের লক্ষণ বানিয়ে বসে নি।" — 'সাহিত্য রূপ', ১৩৩৫।

এস. সিটন-কার, ইণ্ডিগো কমিশনের সভাপতি ও বেঙ্গল গভর্ণমেন্টের সেক্রেটারী, তাঁর ২৭ শে জুলাই, ১৮৬১ খৃষ্টাব্দের চিঠিতে লিখেছেন —

"About the month of October or November last the Rev. Mr. Long brought to my notice the existence of this drama in the original Bengali. I felt quite satisfied that the drama was the genuine production of a native resident in the Moffusil. On dipping into the original I was struck with the thorough knowledge of village life which it displayed, with the pointedness of the Bengali proverbs some of which were new while others were familiar to me and with its colloquial style and vernacular idiom." (২)

অমৃত বাজার পত্রিকা —

"Babu Deno Bandhu was the nation's idol and a dagger penetrated into their hearts could not have given them greater pain than the death of him whom they most adored".

—দীনবন্ধুর মৃত্যুতে প্রকাশিত,
৬ ই নভেম্বর, ১৮৭৩ (৬)

স্যার রিচার্ড টেম্পল — ইণ্ডিগো কমিশনের অন্যতম সদস্য, তাঁর—'Men and Events of my time in India'— গ্রন্থে লিখেছেন —

"Indigo planting in Bengal eventually succumed to the fact that the plant could no longer be produced with profit to the cultivator. But the death Knell of the palmy state was sounded by the Bengalee drama Nil Durpan in which the author 'held the mirror up to nature'." (২)

এফ. এইচ. স্ক্রাইন — স্যার ডব্লু. ডব্লু. হান্টারের জীবনীকার, লিখেছেন —

"'Mirror of Indigo' became a sort of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and led to drastic measures in the relation between planters and natives." (২)

'ইংলিসম্যান' — এর ৪ এপ্রিল, ১৯০১ সংখ্যায় 'Literary Bengal' নিবন্ধে প্রকাশিত—

"Of the Bengali dramatists the only one well known to European readers is Denobandhu Mitra. But in his case again the popularity was scarcely literary. He wrote Nil Durpan, regarding the political effects of which Mr. Buckland gives so interesting a narrative in his book about the Lieutenant Governors of Bengal .... yet there are passages in Nil Durpan which Bengali students say are matchless for grace and purity of style." (২)

নাটকের সাহিত্য-মূল্য সম্বন্ধে কটাক্ষ সত্ত্বেও — নীলদর্পণ সংক্রান্ত মামলার বাদী, তদানীন্তন সম্পাদক Walter Brett এর পত্রিকায়, ৪০ বছর পরে এটুকু 'প্রশংসাও' বিশেষ তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ।

রমেশ চন্দ্র দত্ত —

"Denobandhu, who was born in Chauberia Village, in Nuddea District, had ample opportunities to note the doings of the planters and their subordinates. At last in 1860, he published his first dramatic work, Nil Durpan anonymously, bringing together facts and inci-

dents which had come under his observation, and weaving them into the main plot with the skill of a true artist." (The Literature of Bengal — Chapter XVIII headed — "Dramatic writers, — Dinobandhu Mitra.") (২)

***অধ্যাপক পুলিন দাস* —(৪)**

"মোটের ওপর নীল সমস্যার এমন কোন দিক নেই যা নীলদর্পণে অপ্রকট।"

"নীলের রাজনীতি ও অর্থনীতির বিশ্বস্ত দলিল যেমন নীলদর্পণ, তেমনি বৃহত্তর সামাজিক পরিপ্রেক্ষণীতে স্থাপিত 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটক যেন ধারণ করে আছে সেদিনের গোটা সমাজটাকেই।"

— *বিদ্রূপ* —

***মীর মোশারফ হোসেন* —**

'জমিদার-দর্পণ' নাটকের নাট্যকারের মতে 'দীনবন্ধু ইংরাজ জাতির নেমক রুটি খাইয়া, সেই ইংরেজ নীলকরের কুৎসা গান করিয়া দু'শ বাহবা গ্রহণ করেন।' তিনি দীনবন্ধুকে বিদ্রূপাত্মক 'পাতফোড়', অর্থাৎ, যে পাতে খান, সেই পাতেই ছিদ্র করেন — আখ্যা দিয়া আত্মপ্রসাদ লাভ করেন। কারণ, তাঁর ধারণা — 'জমিদারের অত্যাচার প্রজার অসহ্য হওয়াতেই যেন তাহাদের আর্তনাদে পরম কারুণিক জগদীশ্বর ইংরাজ নীলকরদের এদেশে পাঠিয়েছিলেন।' (৪)

নাটকের আর্থ-সামাজিক—রাজনৈতিক মূল্যায়ন —

নীলদর্পণ নাটকের দর্পণে নীলকর সম্প্রদায়ের কুকর্ম, অত্যাচার শোষণ এবং প্রশাসনের কিছু ক্ষমতাবান কর্মচারী — ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট্, পুলিশ — ইত্যাদির সঙ্গে অশুভ আঁতাতের চিত্রটিই প্রতিবিম্বিত। মূল ব্রিটিশ শাসনের বিরুদ্ধে — স্পষ্ট বা প্রচ্ছন্নভাবে — কোন ঘটনা বা মন্তব্যের উল্লেখ নেই। একদিকে যেমন নীলকরদের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীল ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট্ ফ্রেডারিক হ্যালিডের পক্ষপাতিত্বের নিন্দাসূচক উল্লেখ আছে, তেমনি আবার নিরপেক্ষ, রায়তদের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীল ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট্ অ্যাস্‌লি ইডেন্ (পরবর্তীকালে লেফটেনেন্ট্-গভর্ণর), হার্সেল ও জন পিটার গ্রান্টেরও প্রশংসা আছে। অ্যাস্‌লি ইডেন্ রায়তদের সচেতন করেন যে, আইনত, তারা নীলের চাষ করতে বাধ্য নয়। নাটকে, তোরাপ, নীলকর-সুহৃদ গভর্ণর হ্যালিডের স্থলাভিসিক্ত জন পিটার গ্রান্টের, প্রশাসন কার্যে আইন প্রয়োগের নিরপেক্ষতার প্রশংসায় পঞ্চমুখ। কোম্পানীর আমলে যেমন লর্ড আমহার্স্ট্ ও তাঁর প্রদর্শিত পথ অনুসারী বেন্টিক্, নীলকরদের সুবিধার্থে, প্রশাসনিক, আইন ও রেগুলেশন্ প্রবর্তন করেন, তেমনি ইংলণ্ডস্থ কোম্পানীর ডিরেক্টররা গভর্ণর-জেনারেল বেন্টিক্‌কে, নীলকরদের অত্যাচারের প্রেক্ষিতে, কড়া শাসন ও আইন প্রয়োগেরও নির্দেশ দেন এবং নীলকরদের কার্যকলাপ সম্বন্ধে একটি পূর্ণাঙ্গ রিপোর্টও চেয়ে পাঠান। (১১) পরবর্তীকালে, ব্রিটিশ ক্রাউনের রাজ্যশাসনভার গ্রহণের পরে, ১৮৬০ খৃষ্টাব্দে *Act XI* প্রবর্তিত হয়। এই আইনে যেমন রায়তদের প্রতিকূল — বাধ্যবাধকতা, চুক্তিভঙ্গের জন্য শাস্তি, কয়েদ, বিচার পদ্ধতির অনৈতিক পরিবর্তন — ইত্যাদি ধারা প্রবর্তিত হয়, তেমনি এই আইনেরই একটি বিশেষ ধারায় নীল-অশান্তির পূর্ণ তদন্তের জন্য *'ইণ্ডিগো কমিশন'* গঠিত হয়, যার সুদূরপ্রসারী ফলশ্রুতি — 'বলপূর্বক নীলের চাষ ও শোষণের' চিরকালের মত বিলুপ্তি।

নীলদর্পণ নাটকের সমকালীন পটভূমিকায়, কোম্পানী ও ব্রিটিশ-রাজশাসনের এই 'ভাল-মন্দর' মিশ্র পরিস্থিতির জন্যই বোধহয় সমকালীন সমালোচনা, বিশ্লেষণ ও মূল্যায়নে নাটকের 'ইংরাজ-শাসন বিরোধী' কোন রূপ সুস্পষ্টভাবে চিহ্নিত হয়নি।

পরবর্তীকালে, বিংশ শতাব্দীর দ্বিতীয়ার্দ্ধে, ব্রিটিশ-শাসনের শেষে, বামপন্থী দৃষ্টিকোণে, নীলদর্পণ নাটকে — শ্রেণী-সংগ্রাম, ঔপনিবেশিক ও ব্রিটিশ-রাজশাসনের শোষণ, রাজ্যশাসনে ভারতীয়দের মধ্যে বিভেদ সৃষ্টির দুরভিসন্ধিমূলক কূটিলনীতি — ইত্যাদির, স্পষ্ট না হলেও ফল্গুধারার মত অপ্রত্যক্ষ অবস্থিতি, পরিলক্ষিত হয়।

যদিও বেশ কিছু জমিদার নীলকরদের দ্বারা আক্রান্ত ও ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছিল, তবুও নাট্যকার, নাটকে বিরোধীগোষ্ঠীর কেন্দ্রবিন্দু হিসাবে, মাত্র ১০০ বিঘা জমির মালিক, গাঁতিদার

গোলক বসু ও তাঁর পরিবারকে বেছে নেন। কারণ সেই সময়ের পটভূমিকায়, প্রতিবাদ ও প্রতিরোধের আন্দোলনে, গোলক বসুর মত স্বল্পবিত্তবান, বর্ধিষ্ণু কৃষিজীবীর চারপাশে, হিন্দু, মুসলমান নির্বিশেষে, তোরাপ, সাধুচরণের মত বিক্ষুব্ধ প্রান্তীয় চাষীদের সমবেত হওয়াই স্বাভাবিক ছিল। (১১)

বিশিষ্ট নাট্য-সাহিত্যানুরাগী শ্রদ্ধেয় সুধী প্রধান মহাশয়ের অনুসন্ধানী বীক্ষণ-সমর্থিত বিশ্লেষণের নিম্নধৃত কয়েকটি উদ্ধৃতির মধ্যে, এই পর্যায় আলোচিত বিষয় বস্তুর ভাবগত সাদৃশ্য সহজেই পরিলক্ষিত হয়। (১১)

- " .... But in 1923, Lord Amherst the then Governor-General enabled the planters to recover by summary suit advances made to ryots. Lord Amherst also opened the door to the leasing of land to the Europeans in 1824 ...."
- " .... Bentinck was arguing for increased presence of Europeans in rural Bengal, enlarging the scope of commercial enterprises by Europeans with the help of upper class Indians. ..."
- " .... the drama was written in order to show to the reading public the oppressive nature of the indigo planters who had forced the then British Government to pass an Act. XI of 1860 on 9th April, 1860 ...."
- " .... British ruled India by creating a large group of supporters from the upper strata of Indian society. .... But it also had to be admitted that there were in England a set of democratic people who maintained a vigil against the 'un-British' rulers of British India ...."
- " .... British enacted laws and regulations with the dubious purpose of keeping Indian people divided — at the same time creating a class of legal practitioners who helped to maintain the division among Indian people. ...."
- " .... Corruption in the judicial system, not only amongst British Judges and Magistrates but also amongst native pleaders and mooktars, had all been severely criticised in the drama NIL DURPAN...."
- " .... There was hardly any scope of his (Golok Basu) becoming a big exploiter by virtue of his economic status. As such the most oppressed of the villages, Hindus or Muslims, found his family as naturally and were ready to suffer for their softly and security. .... The rural community, therefore, stood like a single entity to bear the ferocity and tyranny of the indigo planters; ...."

- " .... the play turgets the entirety of the colonial oppression beyond the specific case of Indigo planters. The writer attacks foreign rules, English education, and reliance on European civilisation in the mind of the educated class of India. ...."
- " .... This is the real end of the drama when the dramatist indicates that the final battle to end the oppression of the foreign planters would be fought else where, not by disllusioned men like Nabin Madhav and his kind — but by men like Torap and his associates. ...." * (১১)

> * This is said with reference to Torap's challenge that he was ever ready to kill the planters at the alter of muslim Pirani Barkat Bibi, and Sadhu Charan's report that a band of two hundred peasants armed with lathi were ready to attack the planters and their hired minions.

বামপন্থী দৃষ্টিকোণে নীলদর্পণ নাটকের মূল্যায়ন প্রসঙ্গে নট-নাট্যকার-নির্দেশক উৎপল দত্তের একটি ভাষণের (পরবর্তীকালে, 'আশার ছলনে ভুলি' নামে গ্রন্থাকারে প্রকাশিত) উল্লেখ স্বাভাবিকভাবেই এসে পড়ে। এই পর্যায় আলোচনার স্বল্প-পরিসরে, নিম্নধৃত নির্বাচিত প্রাসঙ্গিক উদ্ধৃতি সহযোগে, সংক্ষিপ্ত সংযোজক-মন্তব্য, আশাকরি তাঁর মূল্যায়নের মূল সুরটির সম্যক উপলব্ধির জন্য সাহায্য করবে। চরিত্রগত বিশ্লেষণের সুবিধার্থে, নিম্নধৃত বিষয়বস্তু, ছয়টি শিরোনামে উপস্থাপিত করা হয়েছে। (১২)

সমকালীন আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রেক্ষিতে —

ইংলণ্ডে একাধিক ভাষায় নীলদর্পণ অনূদিত হওয়ার প্রসঙ্গে, 'নাটকে কোনও বিশেষ গুণ' সম্বন্ধে, বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের দ্বিধার প্রেক্ষিতে উৎপল দত্তের মন্তব্য — "নীলদর্পণ য়ুরোপে প্রচারিত হয়েছিল এই কারণে যে নীলের উৎপাদন ও ব্যবসাটা শুধু বাংলার সমস্যা ছিল না। ব্রিটিশ বুর্জোয়ার সাংগঠনিক প্রতিভায় নীল একটি আন্তর্জাতিক প্রশ্নে উন্নীত হয়েছিল। .... উড ও রোগ সেই মানবতাবর্জিত মুনাফাবৃত্তির উত্তরাধিকারী।" এখানে 'সেই' অর্থে তিনি ইংলণ্ডের বুর্জোয়াদের আফ্রিকাবাসী ক্রীতদাস দিয়ে ওয়েষ্ট্ ইণ্ডিজে নীল চাষেরই উল্লেখ করেছেন।

নীলদর্পণের ভূমিকায় উদ্ধৃত যে সব ইংরেজ 'মহানুভব'-এর উল্লেখ আছে, সেই প্রসঙ্গে উৎপল দত্তের অভিমত — "দীনবন্ধুর আদর্শের ইংরেজরা সবাই গণতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবের সৈনিক। এ থেকেই বোঝা যায় দীনবন্ধুদের আশা-আকাঙ্খা কি অঙ্গাঙ্গীভাবে জড়িয়ে গিয়েছিল

য়ুরোপিয় বুর্জোয়ার প্রগতিশীল কর্মকাণ্ডের সঙ্গে।"

মধ্যবিত্ত অল্পজমির মালিক গোষ্ঠী —

"ইতিহাসকে সম্যক যখন ধরাই যায় না নাটকে, তখন এক এক শ্রেণীর প্রতিনিধিস্থানীয় চরিত্রই বেছে নিতে হয়।" নীলদর্পণ নাটকের ঘটনার কেন্দ্রবিন্দু এক 'গাঁতিদার' গোলক বসু ও তাঁর পরিবার। এই পরিবারের পরিজনেরা সৎ, শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত এবং নিম্নবিত্ত চাষীদের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীল। কিন্তু ইহাদের মধ্যে প্রতিবাদের নৈতিকতাবোধই ছিল, বিদ্রোহের আগুন ছিল না। উডের বুকে লাথি মারার মধ্যে নবীনমাধবের যে হিংস্রতার প্রকাশ তাহা তাঁর ব্যক্তিগত অপমান-উদ্ভুত, তোরাপের 'রোগের' নাক কামড়ে পালিয়ে যাওয়ার মত বিদ্রোহীর প্রতিহিংসা নয়। "দুই শ্রেণীর বিপরীতমুখী আচরণ দীনবন্ধু মনস্তাত্ত্বিক অকাট্যতা-সহ চিত্রিত করেছেন।" তাঁর মতে —".... নীলদর্পণে বসুদের নায়কের স্থানে মেনে নিতে আমাদের প্রাথমিক কোনও আপত্তিই থাকত না — যদি গোলক-নবীন-বিন্দুমাধবে আস্ত নীল-বিদ্রোহ প্রতিফলিত হত। .... দেখা যাচ্ছে বসু-পরিবার নীলকরদের প্রতিপক্ষ হওয়ার শক্তি ধরে না, নাটকে নেতির হিংস্রতা তাদের নেই।" তাঁর মতে — "দীনবন্ধু যাদের মধ্যে নাট্যক্রিয়া কেন্দ্রীভূত করেছেন সেই বসু-পরিবার সমাজের এমন ক্লীব বন্ধ্যা এক অংশের প্রতিনিধি যারা উড-রোগ-গোপীর বিরুদ্ধপক্ষ হবার যোগ্যতাই ধরে না। .... নবীন-বিন্দুরা চাষীদের প্রতি সমবেদনা অনুভব করলেও, মূলত তারা এই আপসহীন যুদ্ধের বাইরে পড়ে গেছে।"

ইংরাজি শিক্ষার আশ্রয়ে বিকশিত এবং স্বল্পশিক্ষিত ইংরেজের বেতনভুক মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণী-

উৎপল দত্ত এই গোষ্ঠীর প্রথম সারিতে রেখেছেন — ডাক্তার, উকিল, হৌসের বড়বাবু, ক্রমে ডেপুটি ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট্, সাংবাদিক ইত্যাদি। "সেই ডাক্তারকেও 'কসাই-এর কুকুরের' পর্যায়ে টেনে নামিয়ে দিয়েছেন দীনবন্ধু। এই পুরো শ্রেণীটি এক নৃশংস লুণ্ঠনযজ্ঞের ভাগিদারমাত্র; এই হচ্ছে দীনবন্ধুর আপসহীন রায়।"

এই প্রসঙ্গে আরো কয়েকটি উদ্ধৃতি —

- "যে মধ্যবিত্ত শিক্ষিতদের ওপর বঙ্গসমাজের এত আশা ছিল, দীনবন্ধু তাদের কার্যকলাপ স্বচক্ষে দেখে নাটকে তাদের ভীষণ চেহারা নিঃসঙ্কোচে তুলে ধরেছেন।"
- "এই হচ্ছে দীনবন্ধুর রায় — শিক্ষিত মধ্যবিত্ত দিয়ে হেন পাপকার্য নেই যা সাহেবরা করিয়ে নিচ্ছে না। ইংরেজের চাকুরী ছিল যাদের পরম গৌরব তারা আসলে এক একটি ক্রিমিন্যাল মাত্র।"
- " .... সাহেবরা ইংরাজি শিক্ষা দিয়েছে শুধু ধারালো কুঠার তৈরী করার জন্য। শিক্ষিত মধ্যবিত্ত সাহেবদের হাতে খাড়ার কাজ করেছে। সাহেবের নির্দেশক্রমে গরিব চাষীকে

বলি দেওয়ার জন্যই মধ্যবিত্ত শিক্ষিতের বাংলার গ্রামে আগমন। এ রকম তীক্ষ্ণ বিশ্লেষণ ১৮৬০ সালে প্রকাশিত বাংলা নাটকের পক্ষে বিস্ময়কর।

- "কিন্তু সামগ্রিক সমাজচিত্র ধরার সফল প্রয়াস দেখি নীলকর ও তাদের আমলাদের দৃশ্যে। শোষণের প্রক্রিয়াটা ফুটে উঠেছে সার্বিক আমেজ নিয়ে। অর্থনৈতিক শোষণ ত প্রত্যক্ষ করি প্রায় প্রতি দৃশ্যে : জমিতে জোর করে মার্কা দেওয়া, দাদন দিতে বাধ্য করা, বকেয়া না মেটানো, শ্রমের চাপে কৃষকদের মৃত্যুর দোরগোড়ায় পৌঁছে দেওয়া।"

তোরাপ-সাধুচরণ—প্রান্তীয় কৃষক-গোষ্ঠী —

সুধীপ্রধানের মতই উৎপল দত্তও নীলকরদের দ্বারা নির্মমভাবে শোষিত, প্রান্তীয় কৃষিজীবী তোরাপদের মধ্যেই বিপ্লবের আগুন দেখেছেন। তাঁর বীক্ষণে, মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণীভুক্ত দীনবন্ধু, নাটকে চরিত্র-রূপায়ণে 'শুধু নিজশ্রেণী ত্যাগ করেননি, তিনি দেশের আশাভরসা দেখেছেন কৃষকশ্রেণীর মধ্যে—কৃষকদের আত্মচেতনার বিকাশ হচ্ছে নীলদর্পণের আর এক মুখ্য উপাদান।'

এই প্রসঙ্গে আরও কয়েকটি উদ্ধৃতি —

- "সাম্রাজ্যবাদকে তীব্রভাবে ঘৃণা করতে জানে যে-শ্রেণী, তারই প্রতিনিধি তোরাপরা। অত্যাচারের প্রতি আপসহীন ঘৃণা তোরাপকে তার অশ্লীল ভাষা-সমেত সৌন্দর্যে মণ্ডিত করেছে। কথাটা প্রখ্যাত সমালোচক মোহিতলাল মজুমদারের :

  এ অশ্লীলতার ন্যায্য অধিকার কেবল এই চরিত্রেরই আছে।
  সে অধিকার হইতে তাহাকে বঞ্চিত করিতে চাহিবে, এত বড়
  রুচিবাগীশ ভগবানও নহেন, তোরাপ তাহাই প্রমাণ করিয়াছে।

  [মোহিতলাল মজুমদার : আধুনিক বাংলা সাহিত্য, কলি, ১৩৫৩ : পৃ ১১৭]

- "তোরাপের মহৎ ক্রোধই তাকে সুন্দর করেছে। তার ভাষা প্রবল রোষের বিস্ফোরণ বলেই দর্শক ও পাঠক বিতৃষ্ণা অনুভব করে না, বরং তার ঘৃণার শরিক হয়ে ওঠে।"
- "দীনবন্ধু নিজেও যে বসু-পরিবারে দৃষ্টি নিবদ্ধ করতে দ্বিধা বোধ করেছিলেন, তার প্রমাণ সংলাপের ভাষায়। কৃষকদের মধ্যে এলেই 'নীলদর্পণ' জীবন্ত হয়ে ওঠে। গ্রামীণ আঞ্চলিক ভাষা, উপমা, প্রবাদ বচন, প্রচলিত গান—সব নিয়ে তোরাপ-সাধুচরণরা হয় গতিশীল, তীব্র, ঘৃণা-বিদ্বেষ-যন্ত্রণা-জর্জর বাংলার সাধারণ মানুষ।"

নীলকর গোষ্ঠী —

আপাতদৃষ্টিতে, নাটকে বর্ণিত নীলকরদের একটি বিশেষ চরিত্রই প্রকট — তাহারা জোরজবরদস্তি, অত্যাচার ইত্যাদির দ্বারা নিজের এবং তাদের দেশের স্বার্থে, বাংলার চাষীদের

নীলের চাষে বাধ্য করেছিল। কিন্তু উৎপল দত্তের বীক্ষণে এদের মধ্যেও চরিত্রগত পার্থক্য চিহ্নিত হয়েছে; যা নিম্নধৃত উদ্ধৃতির মধ্যে সুস্পষ্ট —

> "রোগ সাহেব কামনাতুর পশুমাত্র; পুকুরধারে সুন্দরী দেখলে সে আর নিজেকে নিয়ন্ত্রণে রাখতে পারে না, ... কিন্তু উড সাহেবের অন্তঃকরণটা লম্পটের নয়, মুনাফাবাজের। সে চাষীবধূদের ধরে আনে কৃষকদের মনোবল ধ্বংস করার জন্য; ব্লাকমেইল করার জন্য যাতে ওরা সুবোধ বালকের মত নীলচাষে মন দেয়। .... চাবুক, গরু-চুরি, নারী-অপহরণ তিনটেই উডসাহেবের কাছে এক — শালাদের শাসিত করার অস্ত্রমাত্র। এসবে তার ব্যক্তিগত সম্ভোগের প্রশ্নই নেই।"

নাটক-চরিত্র —

উৎপল দত্তের বিশ্লেষণে, নাটকে—"দীনবন্ধু বুর্জোয়া রাজনৈতিক মতের বিরুদ্ধে রুখে দাঁড়ালেও বুর্জোয়া নাট্যরীতিতে জড়িয়ে পড়েছিলেন উৎকটভাবে।"

আলোচিত ভাষণে, নাটক সম্বন্ধে তাঁর বিশ্লেষণের চারিত্রিক রূপটির উপর আলোকপাতের উদ্দেশে নিম্নধৃত নির্বাচিত উদ্ধৃতিগুলির উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে।

- "বঙ্কিম বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটকের প্রতিটি বর্ণ সত্য। তথাপি তিনি যে সৌন্দর্য রক্ষার এই আবেদন জানাচ্ছেন, এর মধ্যে আমরা একটা আস্ত শ্রেণীর ভয়ভীতির হদিশ পাই। দাঙ্গাহাঙ্গামা বন্ধ করো, নইলে জনতাকে আর নিয়ন্ত্রণে রাখা যাবে না — 'নীলদর্পণ' ও 'জমিদার-দর্পণ' নাটক সম্বন্ধে বঙ্কিমের সমালোচনার মধ্যে এই কথাটাই ধ্বনিত হচ্ছে। বঙ্কিম কি বলবেন, সত্য সুন্দর নয়?"
- " .... সুতরাং 'নীলদর্পণ' কোনও এক মোহমুক্তির চিত্র নয়, একটি আস্ত শ্রেণীর সমূহ হতাশার দলিল।"
- "সরকারী চাকুরীকে পণ রেখে জুয়া খেলে নিজশ্রেণীকে পরিত্যাগ করেছিলেন দীনবন্ধু মিত্র। 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটক নিজশ্রেণী থেকে উত্তরণের দলিলও বটে। মানসজগতে এ এক বৈপ্লবিক অভিযান।"
- "বাস্তব দলিল হিসাবে 'নীলদর্পণ' কালজয়ী হয়েছে এই কারণেই যে বসু-পরিবার থেকে তোরাপ পর্যন্ত সবাই নীলবিদ্রোহের টিপিক্যাল কুশীলব; বেশীরভাগ ক্ষেত্রে সংঘর্ষ ঘটছিল এই রকম চরিত্রের মধ্যে।"
- "ঐতিহাসিক নাটক হিসাবে 'নীলদর্পণ' ১৮৬০ সালে অসাধ্যসাধন করেছে।"

- "শুধু বলপ্রয়োগে এতবড় শোষণ যন্ত্র কিছুতেই চলত না। তাই দীনবন্ধু এনেছেন আইনের অত্যাচারের ভয়াবহ চিত্র; ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট-উড সাহেব মিতালি এবং আইনের প্যাঁচে কৃষককে ল্যাং মেরে নীল উৎপাদনকে স্থায়ী ও ব্যাপকতর করা। "দীনবন্ধুর নীলদর্পণ পড়লেই বোঝা যায় আইন নিয়ে এই স্বেচ্ছাচার কী প্রবলভাবে নাড়া দিয়েছিল তাঁকে।"
- "১৮৬০ সালেই সাম্রাজ্যবাদের প্রবলতম শত্রু কারা, স্বাধীনতা কাদের কাছে দর-কষাকষির পণ্য নয়, অস্তিত্বের একমাত্র আশ্বাস, এ সব 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটকে শিল্পসম্মত-ভাবে নির্দিষ্ট হয়েছে। তাই এই ঐতিহাসিক নাটক হয়ে উঠেছে বর্তমান ইতিহাসের প্রাক-কথন।"
- " .... তেমনি 'নীলদর্পণ' নাটকে আমরা গণবিদ্রোহের যে চিত্র পাই, বিশ্বনাট্যে গণবিদ্রোহ সম্পর্কে যত নাটক রচিত হয়েছে সবগুলিতেই দেখি প্রায় একই উপাদান।"

নাটকের দুর্বলতা —

এই প্রসঙ্গে কয়েকটি নির্বাচিত যুক্তিনির্ভর উদ্ধৃতি —

- "দীনবন্ধু তাঁর নির্বাচিত চরিত্রদের বাস্তব ক্ষুদ্রতা দ্বারা সীমিত হয়ে রয়েছেন। তাদের অকিঞ্চিতকর জীবনধারায় মনোনিবেশ করতে গিয়ে নাটককে পঙ্গু করে ফেলেছেন।"
- "বুর্জোয়া নাট্যধারার প্রথম প্রকাশ ফ্রান্সের ট্রাজেদি ক্লাসিক। তাতে আইনই ছিল যে কটি চরিত্র একান্ত প্রয়োজন তার বাইরে কাউকে মঞ্চে আনা চলবে না। দীনবন্ধু মিত্র এখানে বুর্জোয়া নাট্যের আইনও লঙ্ঘন করেছেন। বসু-বাড়ীতে নারী চরিত্রের মিছিল আসে আর যায়, মূল নাট্যক্রিয়ায় কোনো মোড় তারা ঘোরায় না।"
- "সংলাপই নাট্যকারের হাতে একমাত্র উপকরণ : তার অপব্যবহার নাটকের গতি রুদ্ধ করে। দীনবন্ধু বাধ্য হয়েছেন দৃশ্যের পর দৃশ্যে গোলক বসুর গৃহাভ্যন্তরের ঘর-গেরস্থালির কথা উত্থাপন করতে, যা কখনই নীলবিদ্রোহের কোন প্রাসঙ্গিক চিত্র তুলে ধরে না; বা কথা-প্রসঙ্গেও কোনও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য আমাদের জানায় না। যে-নাটকে ব্যাপক এক কৃষক-বিদ্রোহ হচ্ছে মূল কাহিনী, সেখানে মধ্যবিত্ত পরিবারের হেঁসেল-শয়নকক্ষে অত ঘন ঘন প্রবেশ করলে সময় ও সংলাপের যে অপচয় হয় তা দীনবন্ধু আর সামলে উঠতে পারেন নি।"

নাটকের পরিসমাপ্তির উপর উৎপল দত্তের মন্তব্য দিয়ে এই পর্যায়ের আলোচনা শেষ করা যেতে পারে। শেষ দৃশ্য—'পতন ও মূর্চ্ছা', 'পতন ও মৃত্যু' এবং নারীচরিত্রের আর্তনাদে মুখর হলেও, পাঠক বা দর্শকের হৃদয় দ্রবীভূত হয় না, — "কেননা যে গোলক ও নবীনমাধবের জন্য এই সমবেত রোদন, তাঁরা মৃত্যুর পূর্বে নাটকে বীরের ভূমিকা পালন

করেননি — বস্তুত এমন কিছুই করেননি যার জন্য দর্শকের সমবেদনার জমি প্রস্তুত হবে। এর জন্য প্রধানত দায়ী বসু-পরিবারের শ্রেণী চরিত্র। সেই চরিত্রকে বাস্তবানুগ করতে গিয়ে দীনবন্ধু অনাটকীয় দৈনন্দিনতায় আবদ্ধ থাকতে বাধ্য হয়েছেন, এবং সেই জন্যেই বাধ্য হয়েছেন মেলোড্রামার আশ্রয় নিতে যাতে নাটকে একটা ক্লাইমেক্‌স্‌ ঘটানো যায়।"